









THOUGHTS

ON THE

SCRIPTURE ACCOUNT

OF

FAITH IN JESUS,

AND

LIFE THROUGH HIS NAME :

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS.

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BY THOMAS DOBSON.

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*PHILADELPHIA:*

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*District of Pennsylvania, to wit :*

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twelfth day of October, in the thirty-second year of the Independence of the United States of America, Thomas Dobson, of the said district, hath deposited in this Office the Title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, to wit :

“ Thoughts on the Scripture Account of Faith in Jesus, and Life through His Name : in a Series of Letters. By Thomas Dobson.”

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, intituled “ An Act for the Encouragement of learning by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned.” And also to the Act entitled “ An Act supplementary to an Act entitled “ An Act for the encouragement of learning by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned.” And extending the benefits thereof to the Arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

D. CALDWELL,  
*Clerk of the District  
of Pennsylvania.*

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133

CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

On Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God Page. 9

II.

On the Doctrine of the Trinity, 24

III.

The evidence for the Doctrine of the Trinity considered, 32

IV.

On the Scripture meaning of the Title God, 58

V.

On the Pre-existence of Christ.—The Socinian Scheme, 71

VI.

On the Name of Jesus, and Life through his Name, 91

## VII.

- The same subject : MELCHISEDEC, 116

## VIII.

- On the work of Jesus Christ.—Atonement.  
—Propitiation.—Harmony of the Divine Per-  
fections, 134

## IX.

- God is Love.—Mistaken views of the Charac-  
ter of God, and the Work of Christ, 153

## X.

- Manifestations of the Messiah. 167

## XI.

- Christ the Restorer of Life, 187

## XII.

- Life through the Name of Jesus Christ, 209

## XIII.

- The Nazarite, 224

## XIV.

- The Spirit of Meekness, 244

## XV.

- The Spirit of the Law, 269



## PREFACE.

**T**HE following letters were written with the design of exhibiting some of the most important truths of Christianity, in a more simple and intelligible point of view than that in which they are commonly considered; for it is a truth that *simplicity* and *consistency* are things which are to be learned; and by the want of them, the minds of many pious and sincere persons have been much embarrassed with difficulties and doubts, which have greatly hindered their enjoying the peace of the Gospel.

The Faith that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and the *Life* which believers have through his *Name*, are confessedly subjects of the greatest importance to mankind. To *Christians*, no apology can be needed for soliciting their renewed attention to the design with which the *Life, Actions, and Discourses* of our common Lord were recorded. For such, this little book is intended; more

especially for the younger class of Christians ; that while they are led to learn from the Scriptures, simple and comprehensive views of Divine Truth, and its blessed effects on the hearts and lives of those whose understandings are enlightened by the Divine Spirit, they may be warned against those doctrines of human invention, the tendency of which is unfavourable to the Christian progress. In attempting this latter object, it appeared proper to state concisely some doctrines which were considered as inconsistent with the harmony of Divine Truth, and at the same time to avoid asperity, as none was felt, against the persons who have been misled to hold these doctrines as true.

On such subjects there can be no claim to new discoveries, or originality of thought ; such thoughts as occurred in the conversations or the writings of others, which appeared to illustrate the Scriptures, have been freely used as part of a common stock. The repetitions which frequently occur in the Scriptures, have properly been considered as highly beneficial, for impressing more strongly on the mind, the important truths therein recorded ; and what is here offered, may be viewed as specimens of what any Christian may

do with the Bible in his hands ; and of the advantages which may be derived from collecting into one view, the Scripture testimony on particular subjects, in order to a more consistent understanding of the whole.

A variety of other topics might easily have been introduced, which would have increased the size of this book ; but the object in view was rather to induce others to think and examine the Scriptures for themselves, that their conclusions should not rest on the opinions of any man ; but on the Wisdom of God.

If there shall be found in these pages, errors in sentiment, or misrepresentations of Scripture, they are the faults of the author, no other person being implicated in, nor responsible for them ; and though he does not wish for disputation, he will be ready to acknowledge with thankfulness, such friendly communications as are intended to make him sensible of any error.

*Philadelphia, November, 12, 1807.*



# LETTERS, &c.

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## LETTER I.

*On Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.*

These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have Life through his name. John xx. 31.

**A**LL our knowledge of *the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, is derived from Revelation. As the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain the records of all the Revelations, of universal importance, which God hath been pleased, at fundry times, to communicate to mankind; our knowledge of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, so far as

that knowledge is well founded, must be drawn from that source.

The Scriptures testify that *Jesus* is THE CHRIST. This Greek title corresponds with the Hebrew, MESSIAH; and signifies THE ANOINTED. The disciples of *Jesus* believed that he was *The Christ*. They understood that his being *Anointed of God with the Holy Spirit and with power*, was the primary substance referred to by the typical anointings of former dispensations.

The Prophets were *God's Christs* or anointed ones, Psal. cv. 15. *Touch not mine anointed, do my Prophets no harm.* Compare 1 Kings. xix. 16.—*Elisha—shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room*: This anointing was connected with a participation of the Spirit of the Lord, qualifying them for the office in which they were placed. *The Spirit of Christ which was in them, at sundry times and in divers manners, testified beforehand, of the sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow,* 1. Pet. i. 11.

The priests were consecrated for the office to which they were appointed, by *the anointing with*

*oil.* See among other places, Exod. xxix. 7. *Thou shalt take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.* Compare Exod. xl. 13. 15. with Levit. xvi. 32. &c. He was to be pure and holy in all his actions and relations, as a Nazarene, to keep the charge of the sanctuary of God. Levit. Chap. xxi. *For the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him,* verse 12th. Thus qualified he was to bear the iniquities of the people, to cleanse them by the appointed means, to present their sacrifices and offerings before the Lord, to pronounce the blessings on the obedient, and the curses on the disobedient; exactly according to the law, he was to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way, to teach them out of the law, and to reclaim transgressors. So says Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 10. 11. With the Urim and Thummim, lights and perfections, for judgement, *They shall teach Jacob thy Judgements, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifices upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his*

*hands ; finite through the loins of them that rise up against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.*

The Kings of Israel were *anointed with oil*, and to those of them who served the Lord, there was given the spirit of their station. When Samuel, by the appointment of the Lord, anointed Saul to be captain over the Lord's inheritance, he told him that the spirit of the Lord should come upon him, and he should be so changed as to become another man, which accordingly took place, 1 Sam. Chap. x. This spirit continued, till, for his disobedience, the Lord rejected him. Samuel anointed David, *and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.* 1 Sam. xvi. 13. The King was to walk in the fear of the Lord, and to rule by his holy, just, and good law ; and that he might properly understand this rule of his conduct, he was enjoined to *write him out a copy of the Law from the copy in the hands of the Priests ; and to read therein all the days of his life, that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words*



of the law, and these statutes to do them. He was to exercise justice and judgement among the people : he was the constituted protector of the obedient, particularly of the poor, the widow, and the fatherless. He was to punish evil doers, to watch over the state of the kingdom, to deliver the people, and to subdue their enemies.

Among the Heathen also, God had his *anointed ones* ; Hazael was anointed to execute the judgements of the Lord upon a wicked and disobedient people, in conjunction with Jehu, 1 Kings. xix. 15. 17. 2 Kings. viii. 12. 13. Chap. xiii. 4. and Cyrus was God's anointed to restore the captives, after the judgements of the Lord had produced their effect. Isai. xlv. 1—6. Ezra i. 1—4.

All these were *the Lord's Christs*, or *anointed ones*, for the purpose of performing their respective parts of the will of God in the earthly œconomy, as *figures of the true*. But our Lord Jesus was *anointed with the holy spirit and with power, to do the whole will of God* in the spiritual

œconomy. All his works have spiritual things for their objects as the antitype of all the works of the typical anointed ones. All the Revelations and warnings of the Prophets; all the teachings, cleansings, and intercessions of the Priests; the rulings, judgings, protections, and conquests of the kings; the executions of judgements, and the restoring of the chastened, unite in HIM as in a common centre, in whom all the lines of the Old Testament meet, and with one consent proclaim him to be *indeed* THE CHRIST who was to come into the world.

The New Testament is full of this subject. It may be sufficient to mention only a few instances. In Luke iv. 16—22. our Lord applies to himself the words of the Prophet, Isai. lxi. 1. &c. *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* On the day of pentecost, Peter, filled with the

Holy Spirit, thus testifies, *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD AND CHRIST.* Acts. ii. 36. The same Peter, sent by the spirit of God, testified to the household of Cornelius, that *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.* Acts x. 38. In Heb. i. 8. 9. the Apostle applies to our Lord the declaration in the 45th Psalm. *God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* In Acts iv. 27. 28. the company of the disciples lifted up their voice to God with one accord, considering the prophecy in the second Psalm verified in its application to the transactions whereof they had been witnesses, and thus express themselves respecting it. *Gathered together truly were Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and people of Israel, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done,* (this is a more literal reading, obviously expressing the office of our Lord, and not that his enemies had assem-

bled to do the will of God.) Paul and Apollos, reasoning from the scriptures of the Old Testament shewed to the Jews that *Jesus is the Christ*. Acts xviii. 5. 28. *The anointing of our Lord with the holy spirit and with power*; the anti-type of all the *anointings with oil*, of the public officers in the former dispensations, was that which fitted and authorized him *to do whatsoever the hand and counsel of God determined before to be done*. The kings, judges, and priests of old were anointed to do in a figure and in part those things which God had appointed; but with respect to our Lord Jesus, *his God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows*; because he was appointed to accomplish the whole will of God, not in a figure, but in reality and truth.

The Apostles believed that Jesus was *The Christ of God*, Luke ix. 20. and testified, *Who-so-ever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*. 1 John v. 1. and so essentially important did they esteem the confession of this precious truth, that they ask, *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* Chap. ii. 22.

The disciples of Jesus believed him to be **THE SON OF GOD**. The ancient Christs of God were called in a figure, *Sons of the Highest*, Pſal. lxxxii. 6. being his *anointed servants*, to do his will in the earthly kingdom and sanctuary. He raised them up, fitted them for his purposes, and preserved them as he saw meet, in the performance of his will. When they died, they were succeeded by others, who still kept up the figure, until HE should come to whom they and their works were to give place, as shadows, to the substance which they prefigured; who was to do the whole will of God in the *spiritual kingdom*, and the *true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man*; and who was to be *faithful as a son over his own house*, in those things which the faithful servants had before testified.

Our Lord testified of himself, *I am the Son of God*. John x. 36. It might therefore have been expected that his disciples would receive his testimony as *the truth*; more especially as it had been repeatedly declared by an audible voice from heaven. First, when he was baptized,

and went up out of the water, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo! a voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*, Mat. iii. 16. 17. John the Baptist, seeing and hearing this, bare witness, saying, *This is the Son of God*, John i. 34.

Again, in the audience of his disciples, when he was transfigured before them, Mat. xvii. 5. *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* The disciples were eye-witnesses of his majesty, and of the honour and glory which he received from God, the Father, when they heard the voice from the excellent glory, and testified, 2 Peter. i. 16—19. *and we have the more confirmed the prophetic word*, (for such is the literal reading of the passage.)

His disciples accordingly believed and confessed this truth. Nathaniel gave his testimony to the truth, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.* John i. 49. Peter declared, *We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ,*

*the Son of the living God.* John vi. 69. Compare Mat. xvi. 16. 17. which testimony our Lord himself recognizes as the revelation of his Father who is in heaven. Martha professed the same faith. John xi. 27. *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*

After the resurrection of our Lord, the Apostles testified this great and important truth. Acts iii. 13. 26. &c. When the Ethiopian Eunuch was guided into the spiritual understanding of Isaiah's prophecy by the preaching of Philip, he desired to be baptized, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest," said Philip. He answered, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* Acts viii. 37. Such also was the preaching of Paul in the synagogues, Acts. ix. 20. and he recorded the same truth in his epistles to the churches. Rom. i. 4. 2 Cor. i. 19. Gal. ii. 10. Ephes. iv. 13. Heb. iv. 14. &c. John, in his writings gave the same testimony in repeated instances.

The Lord, in Rev. iii. 14. claims the character of *The beginning of the Creation of God*. The Apostle, Col. i. 15. styles him *the first born of every creature*. Jesus testified that *The Father sanctified and sent him into the world*, John x. 36. and in John xvi. 28. *I came from the Father and am come into the world*, &c. These expressions may, in some measure, convey the idea of his being *the Son of God* before he came in the flesh; all of them, with many other passages, do certainly teach us that he was with the Father before the world was. But the scriptures declare him in a more explicit manner to be *the Son of God*, in respect to his coming into the world and his resurrection from the dead. The Angel said to Mary, *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, and therefore the holy one born of thee shall be called the SON OF GOD*, Luke i. 32. 35. Compare Matt. i. 20. &c. To this correspond the testimonies from Heaven, the record of John the Baptist, the confession of the



disciples of Jesus before his death; and his own testimony, confirmed by the words and works of the Father, which he manifested by the Father's Commandment.

He was declared the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4. As it is also written in the second Psalm. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,* Acts xiii. 33. *The God of our Fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus,* Acts iii. 13. &c. *He is called, The Image of the Invisible God.* Colos. i. 15. because the doctrines and works which shew us the character of the Father, are manifested in him. Hence he says, John x. 37. 38. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do; though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.* He testified to Nicodemus, John iii. 16—18. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that*

*the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not is condemned already ; because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.* The expressions, *Only begotten Son of God ; God's beloved Son, God's own Son, &c.* peculiarly applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, mark the distinction between him, and those who become the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. They are *adopted children*, and *the spirit of his Son*, whom *God sends into their hearts*, is in them *the spirit of adoption* whereby they cry *Abba Father* ; Rom. viii. 15. of which the adoption pertaining to the Israelites, Rom. ix. 4. was a figure. The Apostle expresses the relation both in Hebrew and Greek, to shew that the true adopted children, whether Jews or Gentiles, *were all made to drink into one spirit* : as our Lord, by the same expression, Mark xiv. 36. intimates the unity of the relation between the Father and him in both dispensations.

The distinguished preeminence which our Lord Jesus Christ did and does possess, over the

Old and over the New Creation; the doctrines of the Father which he teaches; the works of the Father which he accomplishes; the testimony of the Father concerning him; and the unsearchable fulness which the Father hath treasured up in him: all unite in demonstrating that **JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD.**

Such was the faith of the Ancient Christians; *They believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and believing, they had life through his name.*

## LETTER II.

*On the Doctrines of the Trinity.*

THE primitive simplicity of the christian doctrines soon became obscured by innovations, arising from mistaken views of Divine Truth; and introducing certain dogmas, which have been extensively received and zealously maintained, though they do not appear to be consistent with the important and well authenticated truth, that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.* Of this class seems to be the doctrine of *the Trinity*, which the Westminster assembly and other protestant denominations have adopted into their respective confessions, or articles of faith, from the Roman Catholic creed ascribed to Athanasius. This doctrine represents the *Most High God*, as consisting of three distinct persons, styling them *God the Father, God the Son,*

and *God the Holy Ghost* ; of one *Substance, Power, and Eternity* ; each of which persons is declared to be in himself completely *The Most High God, Immutable, Eternal, Infinite in being and perfections*. Yet that these three persons, each of whom is in himself truly and properly God in the highest sense ; considered collectively, *are only one God*, so that one Infinite being is three Infinite beings, and three Infinite beings constitute only one Infinite being. This is sometimes called *Unity in Trinity* and *Trinity in Unity*, sometimes *The Triune God*. The Trinity is considered as admitting the numerical distinction of first, second, and third persons ; though the doctrine declares that none of these persons is before or after another ; but that they are co-equal, and co-eternal ; the same in substance, equal in Power and Glory. Of these three, the Lord Jesus is called the second person in the Trinity ; being *Very and Eternal God, of the same substance, and equal with God the Father*. He is said to have taken upon him man's nature ; so that two whole, perfect, and

distinct natures, the Godhead and the Manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, which person is Very God, and very man (hence called God-Man :) yet *one Christ*, or *one Anointed*; and this one anointed person, in whom the divine and human natures were inseparably joined together,—suffered, and—died! ————— By his obedience and death, *God the Son*, is said to have *fully appeased the wrath*, and to have *satisfied the justice of God the Father*. He is said to have *purchased the reconciliation of God the Father to man*—*purchased Pardon*—*purchased Eternal Life*—nay even to have *purchased God the Holy Ghost*, from *God the Father*!

Were not the fact so notorious, that this doctrine is very generally maintained with great zeal, while the important truth, that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, which the holy spirit has so explicitly testified, is too often only received with a cold and listless assent; a christian, who seeks only in the Scriptures for information concerning the things of God, would sure-

ly think it very strange that the doctrine of the Trinity should ever be esteemed *a leading principle in Christianity*. Yet this doctrine has long been, and now is, very zealously maintained by many very valuable christians, whose piety and sincerity are unquestionable. Our Heavenly Father, whose compassions fail not, will recover, and bring home to himself, his bewildered children.—The humble heart that asks in faith, will never seek his face in vain—but their errors will not profit them. They have embraced this doctrine as they were taught in early life, and taught to consider it as a subject too sacred for inquiry, and that inquiry must be fruitless, because the doctrine itself was incomprehensible.

It is probable that this doctrine grew by degrees to its present state of inextricable perplexity; and very likely arose at first from serious, though misdirected zeal for the Glory of God. We certainly know that it is now maintained, by many of its advocates, from the best motives, who thereby mean to glorify the Saviour; although he did not desire to receive ho-

nour of human contrivance: but such incomprehensible paradoxes, however piously intended, have done much evil, they have covered the precious testimony of God with a thick and pernicious veil of mystery, which darkens that which God had made clear, and represents as crooked that which he had made straight. Such indeed is likely to be the case when men attempt to refine upon the Wisdom of God. However good their intentions at first, *they become vain in their imaginations; their foolish hearts become darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.* Those who follow them, instead of being led into light and wisdom, have their understandings comparatively darkened; being embarrassed in obscurity and difficulties, they stumble, not knowing whither they go; whilst the Revelation which they profess to believe, and many of them sincerely prize, thus misrepresented, is exposed to scoffing and derision from those who reject Revelation; and which its advocates, when thus embarrassed, are unable to repel. Indeed nothing has so much con-



tributed to expose Christianity (which in its native purity is perfectly rational) to this scoffing and derision, as maintaining certain doctrines which in reality are no part of christianity, to be radical and essential principles of it, and which are, at the same time, of such a nature that the reason and common sense which God hath given to mankind must revolt at. Of this kind seem to be the doctrine of the Trinity, with its peculiar appendages; and the doctrines of the annihilation, or of the eternal misery of part of mankind. Doctrines which must have their origin in the wisdom of man, for they are not to be found in *the Records of the Wisdom of God*.

There is another scheme of the doctrine of the Trinity which may have arisen out of that already mentioned, and is now embraced by some very pious persons, whose minds of course are in some measure darkened thereby; for some degree of darkness of mind is the natural consequence of receiving any of the schemes of human wisdom in place of any of the doctrines of

God. This scheme has some resemblance to the doctrine taught by Sabellius, an Egyptian Philosopher, about 1500 years ago, and is somewhat to this effect: that there is only one Supreme God, who is at once Father, Son and Holy Ghost, that these names are not expressive of personal distinctions; there being no plurality of persons in the Deity; but they are oeconomic titles, or names of the same Being in different characters. The same one God, in the character of Father, sends himself, in the character of Son, and anoints himself, in the character of Holy Ghost. That this one God, in the character of Son, assumed the human nature into union with the divine nature, and in that capacity, fulfilled the demands and suffered the penalty of his own law. That by dying, in the character of Son, in obedience to himself in the character of Father, he rendered a perfect satisfaction to all that he himself, in the character of Father, by his law required. Suffering the curse of his own law, he purged the human nature. The Eternal God, in the

character of Son—died!—that he might redeem and raise human nature. That Jesus Christ is the only one Eternal God ; being Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in one person with the humanity.

There are several different shades, or varieties in this scheme, differing but little from one another, and generally agreeing in endeavouring to illustrate this view of the Trinity by comparing it to the soul, body, and operation in man, and to the root, stem and branches in a tree ; these being considered as essentials, constituting one man, and one tree ; as figures, or images of the Supreme God, who is at once Father, Son and Holy Ghost in one person, manifested in the one or the other character as occasion may require.—To what strange lengths does the invention of man run ! Seeking to find out or to make incomprehensible mysteries, and then attempting to explain what is inexplicable ! and that too, in subjects which the wisdom of God has exhibited with such plainness and simplicity that he may run who readeth.

## LETTER III.

*The Evidence for the Doctrine of the Trinity considered.*

THE advocates for whatever has been taught as a doctrine of Christianity, have very properly appealed to the Scriptures for its truth; because, if it is really true, the Scripture is the proper source from which it is drawn, and the proper authority to support it. If what was held for truth, however, was really an error, which has sometimes been the case; the belief of it by the best men, however sincere, could not make it true; nor could the greatest learning and ingenuity, in attempting to prove it from the Scriptures, ever make that a right application of the Sacred Record.

The believers in the doctrine of the Trinity have not been backward in quoting passages of

Scripture in support of its truth ; and there is no reason to doubt of their sincerely believing that such was the real meaning of the texts cited, and that of course they proved the truth of the doctrine maintained. This is unquestionable ; because they had no more interest in being mistaken than their brethren, who differed from them in opinion, but were not more infallible than themselves. There can be no doubt that the conscientious of different persuasions, act honestly according to their knowledge in holding such opinions ; but where the sentiments are diametrically opposite, it is impossible that they can both be true ; and we certainly know that error or mistake, in important subjects, is not a matter of indifference, when the means of knowing the truth are in our own power. Let us then candidly consider those passages of Scripture which have generally been applied to as proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity, not with a view to condemn those who think differently, for this the Christian spirit does not authorize ; but to inquire whether

they do not furnish us with more rational and consistent, and therefore better information.

In the confession of Faith and Catechisms, published by the Presbyterian church in the United States, which pretty much correspond with those of the Westminster Assembly; in Chap. 2. Sect. 3d. and Larger Catechism, Question 9th. several texts of Scripture are quoted as proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity; which, from their having been selected by men of great piety and learning, in ancient and modern times, may be considered as having been esteemed the most decisive evidence which could be produced in proof of that doctrine. The first of these is 1 John v. 7. *For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* The inquiry will naturally be, In what respect are these three one? Are they one person? One scheme of the Trinity says, *Yes: Jesus Christ is Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in one person, one individual being.* There are no personal distinctions in Deity, for God is one; and this one God is

Jefus Chrif. This account, which feems to be a mixture of truth and error, is denied by the other fcheme, which fays, *No : Thefe three are indeed one fubftance or effence ; one God ; but not one perfon ; for God the Father is the firft perfon, God the Son is the fecond perfon, and God the Holy Ghoft is the third perfon in the Trinity.* The text, however, fays not one word about the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoft, being *one fubftance or effence, or one God, or three perfons, or one perfon.* What then ? Simply that *thefe three are one,* and the only point of unity fpoken of in the text is, *unity in bearing record ;* or that they are three witneffes who agree in their testimony ; as the next verfe, which may be confidered as a proper illuftration of this, declares that *the Spirit and the Water, and the Blood, bearing witness on earth, agree in one testimony.* We do certainly know that the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood, are neither *one God, nor one fubftance, nor one perfon, nor three perfons ;* but *three witneffes, who agree in one testimony.* That *Jefus Chrif is the Son of God, and that he came by water and*

*blood, and it is the spirit which beareth witness, because the spirit is the truth. The believers in this testimony overcome the world.*

It has been often said that part of the 7th and 8th verses was not in the original, but afterwards introduced; and that the true reading was, *There are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood, and these three agree in one.* Professor Michaelis shews, that the celebrated Martin Luther would never suffer it to be otherwise printed in his German translation of the New Testament, while he lived, and that the last edition printed in his lifetime, 1546, in which he published his caveat against any alterations being made in it, read this passage as above stated; but after his death, the printers of his New Testament disregarded Luther's warning; and in the edition of Frankfort, 1574, first introduced the 7th and 8th verses as we now read them. The best and most learned critics have been of Luther's opinion, that from the words, *in heaven*, verse 7th, to the words, *in earth*, verse 8th, both inclusive, was



not in the original, and is wanting in the most ancient and best esteemed Greek manuscripts that are known. Indeed from the subject itself there seems to be some reason for this opinion; for who can we suppose to be in Heaven to whom this record-bearing is needful? Can we suppose any one there to have doubts of *Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, and that he came by Water and Blood?* But waving this criticism, it is plain that the only thing testified of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, in the text is, that these three are united in the record which they bear, as the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood are united in the witness which they bear; but not one word about their being *one God, composed of three Divine, Co-equal, Co-eternal Persons.* It seems difficult to conceive how this passage should ever have been deemed susceptible of such a construction, unless the understanding of the reader were previously warped from the simple perception of Divine Truth, by the influence of prejudice in favour of the doctrine of the Trinity, which had been impressed on the

mind by the authority of teachers in early life, at which period we know that impressions of error take at least as deep root as those of truth.

The second proof adduced is Matth. iii. 16. 17.—*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo! a voice from Heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Were it not that what we are accustomed to ceases to astonish us, and the fact is so well known that this passage is actually brought as a proof of the doctrine of a Trinity of co-equal co-eternal persons consisting of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; it might justly be thought very strange that this passage of Scripture should ever be applied to this purpose. It is true the names, *Jesus, God, and Spirit of God*, occur in this passage, and the doctrine of the Trinity styles Jesus Christ *Very and Eternal God, of the same substance, and equal with the Father.* Was the *Very and Eternal God*, baptiz-

ed by the sufferance and by the hands of a man? Is it possible to believe that *God the Son* was on earth, and that *God the Holy Ghost* came down from Heaven from *God the Father*, and alighted upon *God the Son* upon earth, who had just come up out of the water wherein he had been baptized by John the Baptist, and that *the God and Father of God the Son* declared by a voice from Heaven that *God the Son* was his beloved Son; and at the same time to believe that these three, so remarkably distinguished, are *one God, the same in substance, equal in Power and Glory*? That these things are possible to be believed appears from their being really believed and zealously maintained; but the ideas necessarily included in an application of this passage to support the doctrine of the Trinity, do not appear to be authorized by the scriptures. How will this passage support the other scheme of the Trinity, which supposes Jesus Christ to be the only True God, and as being at once Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in one person? Was the *only True God* really baptized in water by the

hands of a man? Did he descend from himself from Heaven, and alight upon himself upon earth? Did he proclaim from himself in Heaven respecting himself upon earth, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?* These seem strange questions; but do they not naturally arise from such attempts to prove the one or the other scheme of the Trinity? It seems hardly possible to suppose any thing of the kind more improper than the application of these passages of Scripture to such a purpose.

It would surely be no easy matter for a Christian of unperverted mind to understand Matth. iii. 16. 17. otherwise than as a plain testimony that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God, declared to be such by the voice from Heaven; that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ gave his Holy Spirit to his beloved Son, in whom he declared himself to be well pleased; and that the spirit of God, descending from Heaven like a dove, lighted upon him; but surely there is not in the text the smallest intimation that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are each of them God in the highest sense;*

*that they are three Divine Persons, of the same substance, power and eternity, and that these three persons are one God, or that these three are one individual being.*

The third proof of the doctrine of the Trinity is Matth. xxviii. 19. *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* In this text there is not one word of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, being three Divine Persons, nor of each of them being God, nor of the three being one God, nor of their being of one substance, power, and eternity. Yet these are the very points which it is brought forward to prove. In the 18th verse, our Lord himself has effectually obviated all idea of equality, whether men believe him or not; by declaring that all power in heaven and in earth *was given to him.* Thereby shewing what he always declared, that it was not by any power or authority originally his own that he acted; but always *by the authority which his God and Father had given to him.* In virtue

of this power which was given to him, he commanded his apostles to go and disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name, &c.

The only argument from this text is drawn from the three names being mentioned, into which believers or disciples were to be baptized. One scheme of the Trinity maintains that these three names are characters of one individual being, not of three persons, for Jesus Christ is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in one person. This interpretation is rejected by the other scheme, which maintains that the three names are descriptive of three Divine Persons; each of whom is in himself strictly and properly God in the highest sense of the term, and that these three, collectively, are one God. *The Name* may be understood to signify the character, or by the authority of. An argument has been attempted by both schemes from the words *in the name*, being only once used in the text, to shew that the one name *God* belongs, as a common name, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This will appear to be to-

tally without foundation, by considering that the form of expression here used merely prevents needless repetition, and is in such common use in every language as to leave no room for the smallest ambiguity, for instance, in Matth. xxiii. 23. our Lord says to the Pharisees, *ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin.* Every reader understands it precisely in the same way as if it had been expressed thus; *ye pay tithe of mint, and ye pay tithe of anise, and ye pay tithe of cummin;* so in the present instance, the expressions used are perfectly equivalent to *into the name of the Father, and into the name of the Son, and into the name of the Holy Ghost,* and appear admirably calculated to express the character, authority, and design, of the three manifestations of Divine Goodness, which were now to be exhibited to mankind, as united in Jesus Christ; in whom all the Dispensations of God harmonize in the great work of cleansing mankind from their sins; which is the express object of the emblem in Baptismal washings, in all the three dispensations.

The first of these dispensations was that of *the Father* in the Law and by the Prophets; by whom *God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past to the Fathers*; giving them those gracious Promises which were the grounds of that faith whereby they obtained a good report, the fulfilment of which was shadowed forth by typical emblems, in the hope of which fulfilment, they died, confidently looking for a better country which is a heavenly. The Apostles testified none other things than those which Moses and the Prophets did say should come.

The second was the personal ministry of *the Son of God* on earth, who *came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil*. By him the authority and character of the former dispensation were recognized. He came to manifest the same Divine Goodness, in the very way in which the Law and the Prophets had testified concerning him. He manifested *the Glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and*



*Truth.* He came not to destroy the world but to save the world.

The third was the ministration of the Holy Spirit, which began on the day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ ; by which the Apostles were endued with power from on high, to preach unto all the nations, Repentance and forgiveness of sins, through the name of Jesus. The office of the spirit was to convict the world of Sin, and of Righteousness and of Judgement. Harmonizing with the other dispensations, explaining them, and shewing that they all flowed from the same principle of Infinite Goodness, and were carrying forward by Jesus Christ to the same Glorious end, until God shall have accomplished that end in the reconciliation of all things by Jesus Christ to himself.

These three Divine dispensations are united in the character and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all Power in Heaven and in Earth is given for the very purpose of fulfilling the good pleasure of God which he had purpos-

ed in himself, of reuniting all things under Jesus Christ, and reconciling all things by Jesus Christ to himself. Hence, baptizing in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, appears to be properly performed by baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom these three dispensations are united. That this was the way in which the Apostles, directed by the Holy Spirit, understood our Lord's command, may appear from their uniform practice, recorded in the book of Acts. There is not one instance recorded there of any person having ever been baptized under the form of words now in use; but always in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and accordingly in the epistles, where there is a reference to Baptism, it is mentioned as being *baptized into Jesus Christ, baptized into his death, buried with him in baptism.*

2 Cor. xiii. 14. *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, amen.* This text is likewise cited to prove the doctrine of

the trinity in unity; for what reason does not clearly appear, *unless* it be *because* the names *Jesus Christ, God* and *Holy Ghost* are mentioned in it. It seems not to have been noticed that *Jesus Christ, and God* are spoken of as distinct from one another. Whoever reads this whole epistle with unprejudiced mind, will surely not understand this text as teaching that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are each of them individually *the most high God*, and that the three together are *the most high God*, and for this obvious reason, that the text says nothing about it. In the fourth verse of this chapter the Apostle declares that *Jesus Christ was crucified through weakness, but he liveth by the Power of God*. The doctrine of the Trinity, however, attempts to obviate this difficulty, by saying that it was *the Human Nature of Christ* which was crucified through weakness, but liveth by the power of God; but this introduces a dilemma, not less embarrassing than the difficulty, which it was meant to obviate; for as the Apostle, in the text, does not speak of any

such distinction of Natures ; it would not be acting consistently to view the fourth verse in this way without viewing the third and fifth verses in the same way. How would it do to read the third verse thus, *since ye seek a proof of the Human Nature of Christ speaking in me ?* and again in verse fifth, *know ye not your own selves, that the human nature of Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates ?* Would it not appear like a burlesque on the Apostle's writing ? and yet to be consistent, such reading would be unavoidable.

If by *the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, we understand that gracious condescension whereby he who was Rich for our Sakes became poor, that we by his poverty might become rich, which the Apostle states in this same epistle, Chap. viii. ver. 9. as the pattern for us to follow. And if by *the Love of God*, we understand that manifestation of himself in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, that they might be led to the exercise of love to God, and their

neighbour, and if by *the Communion of the Holy Spirit*, we understand that joint participation of the Divine Spirit which produces Heavenly-mindedness, Humility and Love, we will much better perceive the excellence of the Apostolic benediction, than by seeking in it for a proof of the Doctrine of the Trinity, which it surely was never intended to teach.

Another passage cited to prove the doctrine of the Trinity is John x. 30. *I and my Father are one.* In this chapter, our Lord, in his figurative manner of teaching, declares that he is the good Shepherd, who loveth the sheep and giveth his *Soul* (so the word signifies) for them. At the 24th verse the Jews had said, *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* Jesus answered them, *I told you before and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me; but ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My*

*Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all ; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.* The Jews then took up stones to stone him, and on his asking them for which of the good works which he had shewed them from his Father they meant to stone him ? They answered, *for a good work we stone thee not ; but for blasphemy ; and that thou being a man makest thyself God.* Jesus did not make himself God ; but said, *I am the Son of God.* That the Jews mistook the meaning of our Lord, and hated him without a cause, is very evident, and will be generally acknowledged by Christians ; but that Christians, after reading the answer of our Lord, should adopt precisely the same mistake of the Jews, by supposing that *he made himself God*, seems very strange indeed. This was not the only mistake of the kind which the Jews made. This evangelist relates in the 5th chapter, that Jesus had cured an impotent man on the Sabbath day, therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the

Sabbath day ; but Jesus answered them, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* Therefore the Jews sought the more to slay him ; *because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.* Any one who will read this fifth chapter without prejudice, may see what pains the Lord himself took to shew the Jews that *he claimed no such equality ;* but as he had elsewhere shewed that it was lawful to do well on the Sabbath day, and therefore healing the sick was no breach of the Sabbath, so here he declared that *the Son could do nothing of himself,* and that all the power which he possessed was given him by the Father. In like manner, in this tenth chapter, he shews himself to be the voluntary servant of the Father, acting in all things by his commandment, and referring to the works of the Father which he did, as the evidence *that the Father dwelt in the Son, and the Son in the Father.* As the Apostle testifies of Christians, *He that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* 1 John iv. 16. The expression,

verse 30th, *I and my Father are one*, if understood as the doctrine of the Trinity states it, would form an exception to the whole of the context, and indeed to the whole of the Scriptures; for he says, verse 29, *My Father who gave them to me is greater than all*; and in this not even the Son is excepted; for in Chap. xiv. 28. expressing the same truth, he says, *my Father is greater than I*, and in verse 36. of this chapter we learn from himself that *the Father sanctified and sent the Son into the world*. The unity of the Father and Son therefore plainly appears from the scope of the passage to denote their being united in their care and love of the Sheep, to whom the Son giveth eternal Life by the appointment of the Father, and the Father who is greater than all, takes such care of them, that none is able to pluck them out of his hand. But there is not in all the passage, nor indeed in the whole Divine testimony, the smallest intimation that the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are each of them God in the highest sense of the term, and that the three are one



God, which are the very points, to establish which the text was quoted.

Coloff. ii. 9. *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* This is viewed as one of the proofs of our Lord being the Supreme God. The fairest and best way of understanding any passage of Scripture is by considering it in the connection in which the Wisdom of God has placed it, which will always be found in perfect harmony with the whole of the Sacred volume. In this epistle, the Apostle, consistently with all his other writings, distinguishes between *our Lord Jesus Christ*, and *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Hence in Chap. i. 3. he styles God, *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; *who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son*, verse 12. 13. *who is the Image of the Invisible God*, ver. 15. *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell*; *that having made peace through the blood of his Cross, he might by him reconcile all things to himself*, ver. 19. 20. This expression, *in him dwelleth all*

*the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Chap. ii. 9. refers plainly to the *all fulness which the Father saw meet should dwell in Christ*, Chap. 1. 19. and is precisely the same Truth, in other words, which our Lord had expressed, Matth. xxviii. 18. *All Power* (or authority) *is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth*, and when he said, Matth. xi. 27. and Luke x. 22. *All things are delivered to me of my Father*. We do not read in the Scripture that *all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in the Father*; because in every correct idea which we can have of the Father, we contemplate every perfection in Him as the Original Self-existent Fountain of all Perfection; but all the Fulness and Perfection which the Son possesses, according to his own testimony, is not originally *his own*; but *given to Him by the Father*. As Christians have nothing good originally their own; but all that Fulness and Perfection which it is possible for them to possess is derived from Christ, in whom it pleased the Father that all Fulness should dwell for that very purpose, Hence the Apostle says, *ye are complete* (or have

*your fulness*) in Him, which in another passage, he expresses by being *filled with all the fulness of God*, Ephes. iii. 19. In this same chapter, the Apostle speaks of Christ being *crucified, dead, buried, risen* : none of which things are possible to be true of the only true God, nor is it possible to be true of the only true God, that he is *the Christ, or Anointed*. Again Chap. iii. 1. The Apostle says, *Christ sitteth at the right hand of God*, and that our life is *hid with Christ in God*, and that our thanks are to be given *to the Father by Christ* : he represents him as the head and us the members, as he elsewhere says, *the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God*, 1 Cor. xi. 3. Thus in the scope of this Epistle, harmonizing with the whole Sacred Record, the Apostle clearly distinguishes between *Christ* and the *God and Father of Christ*. In this second chapter, the doctrine which the Apostle teaches could not be true if Christ were the Supreme God. How could they be *crucified, dead, and risen with Him, if He is the Self-existent God*? The Apostle exhorts the Chris-

tians, as they have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in him, because all the Godhead, or all fulness, dwells in him, for the very purpose of reconciling all things unto God by him; that he is the head of all principality and power, and that Christians have their fulness in him, and shews how they have all their perfection; by being circumcised by him with the circumcision made without hands, buried with him, risen with him, quickened by him, forgiven by him, delivered from the Law, united to him, the living head, as members of his body deriving their nourishment from him, and increasing with the increase of God. This is very different from teaching that Jesus Christ is the Supreme God.

There are many other passages of Scripture which have been urged as evidences of the doctrine of the Trinity; every one of which admits of an easy and satisfactory solution, consistently with the connection in which it stands, and with the whole scope of the Scripture; for there is no discordance in the word of God.

There does not appear one single instance of any passage in the whole Scripture, which either expressly, or by fair and just inference, teaches any thing like the doctrine of the Trinity; and if there is no evidence of its being intentionally taught in the Sacred Record, it is not likely to enlighten, but rather to darken the minds of those who receive it; and instead of increasing their faith and comfort, rather to corrupt their minds from the Simplicity that is in Christ; by leading their attention to the traditions of men, instead of the Scripture account of the Character of *the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.*

## LETTER IV.

*On the Scripture meaning of the title GOD.*

MUCH stress has been laid upon a circumstance, which is indeed, very plain in the Scriptures ; but which when viewed otherwise than as the Scriptures have stated it, has misled many. There are many things spoken of in the Scriptures as the works of God, which are really such ; and the same things are said to be done by Jesus Christ, which is equally true. The inference drawn from these is that *Jesus Christ is God*, and that if he is God, then he is *equal with the Father*. The mistake seems to be in not considering that God accomplishes his works by Jesus Christ, who is the Son and Servant of God. So he himself represents it. *Many good works have I shewed you from my Father.* John x. 32. again, *I must work the works of*

him that sent me; again, as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do; again, I have kept my Father's commandment; again, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, &c. &c. &c. Perhaps a mistaken view of the import and Scriptural use of the title God, may have been part of the origin of this doctrine, which has so much misled many very serious souls; puzzling them with doctrines, incomprehensible, yet represented as necessary, and indeed fundamental articles of Faith; thereby preventing in a considerable degree, their enjoyment of that rational and spiritual consolation, which arises from a satisfactory understanding of that important Truth, which the Scripture declares to be of so much importance to spiritual Life.

It may not be improper in this place to repeat some remarks from a letter on the Kingdom of God, which may be of some use in considering this subject.

“ The Hebrew term *Alehim*, generally translated *God* in the Old Testament, signifies Strength, Power, Authority, Dominion; con-

veying the idea of binding, restraining by fancies, and of Ruling and Judging by Laws. The term is of a plural form, probably to express the Supreme excellency and dignity of the only true God, to whom the title primarily belongs, and the Infinity and Perfection of the Power and Authority which he essentially possesses. It has been supposed that this name, being a plural term, expresses a plurality of persons in the Divine Essence; and the expressions, *Let us make man*, and *the man is become like one of us*, have been supposed to prove it. If we consider what the Divine Spirit testifies, viz. That *Jesus Christ was in the beginning with God, and was God, possessing Glory with his God and Father before the foundation of the World*, and that *God created all things by him*, as his servant or agent; we will find a much more rational, and at the same time, *the true signification* of such expressions. The phrase, *let us make*, no more expresses perfect equality in the makers, than the phrase, *Let us reason*, *Isai. i. 18.* expresses perfect equality in the reasoners.



“ That the term Alehim does not necessarily express a plurality of persons, will farther appear from considering its use and application in the Scriptures.—In the 45th Psalm, the title is applied to the Father, and to the Son; surely it cannot be supposed that the Father and the Son are each of them a plurality of persons; for that would be supposing not less than four persons at least; yet the plural title Alehim is applied to each individually, with this difference, that the Father is called the Alehim of the Son. In the first chapter of Hebrews, this is rendered, as in our English bibles, in the singular by the word *Theos, God. Thy God* hath anointed thee. Moses is called Alehim, Exodus vii. 1. surely Moses was not a plurality of persons. Deut. vi. 4. is considered as one of the most decisive evidences that this term expresses a plurality of persons in the Divine Essence. *Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*, where *Alehim*, rendered *God* is a plural, and *Jehovah* rendered *Lord* is a singular term. On this it will be sufficient to remark, that our Lord Jesus

Christ, who perfectly understood it, has rendered *Alehim* by the Greek word *Theos*, which is singular, Mark xii. 29, and our Translators had good authority in his example for rendering the Hebrew term by the singular English word *God*. It is still contended that *Alehim* expresses a plurality of persons, because it is joined with plural verbs, for instance, *Let us make*. It might with at least equal propriety be suggested that it must express one person only, because it is much more frequently joined with singular verbs. Does the name *Jehovah* express a plurality of persons, because *Jehovah* said, *let us go down*? Gen. xi. 6. 7. The truth seems to be, that *Alehim* is the plural form of the noun; and when applied to more than one person, we find it expressed by our Lord in the New Testament by the plural term *Theoi*, Gods. John x. 34. *I said ye are Gods*—and our Translators, in Psal. xcvii. 7. have very judiciously rendered it plural. *Worship him, all ye Gods*, and verse 9th, *far above all Gods*. But when applied to single individuals, they have with equal propriety

rendered it singular ; because in that case the term may express the various powers and relations sustained by the individual to whom it is applied ; but it would have been improper to represent an individual, for instance Moses, as more persons than one, and called him Gods.”\*

The names, *Alehim* and *Jehovah*, both appear to be relative names, or titles of office. The name *Jehovah* signifies, *He who causeth to be, or bringeth into effect*. A little reflection on what God said to Moses, Exod. vi. 3. may be of use to lead us to right apprehensions of this subject. *I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the name or character of GOD ALMIGHTY ; but by my name or character JEHOVAH, was I not known to them.* The name *Jehovah*, rendered *Lord*, occurs frequently before the sixth chapter of Exodus, and must have been known to the Fathers as a title belonging to God, and appears to have been realized or manifested on several

\* Letters on the Existence and Character of the Deity, and on the Moral State of Man. Letter xxiii.

occasions. God had said, *Let us make man* : when he proceeded to carry his purpose into effect, he was accordingly styled and manifested in the character of *Jehovah, He who causeth to be*, Gen. ii. 5. 7. 8. 9. 15. 16. 18. 19. 21. 22. In these instances he is manifested as *causing to be*. In the third chapter he is manifested as *bringing into effect* the threatening announced Chap. ii. 16. and *causing to be* protection, and labour for mankind. Very many instances to this purpose might be adduced ; it will be sufficient barely to mention the Flood, and the destruction of Sodom, where God was manifested in the character of *Jehovah, he who causeth to be*, or *bringeth into effect*. He had even been manifested to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in other things by the Character of *Jehovah, He who causeth to be* ; but in relation to the promise of the Land of Canaan to their seed, he could not in their day be manifested as realizing it, and therefore, with respect to that promise, he made himself known by the name of *God Almighty*, able to perform. They viewed him in that cha-

rafter. The Apostle tells us, *They believed, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform,* Rom. iv. 21. Thus also we know that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in Righteousness by Jesus Christ: we know that *the judge of the quick and the dead* is a title belonging to our Lord Jesus Christ; but we also know that this official character is not yet manifested in actual operation.

But when the time was come for him to begin to perform the promise made to the Fathers, God was pleased to manifest himself in the character of *Jehovah, He who causeth to be*, and therefore he commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel that he would deliver them and be to them a God, and adds, *ye shall know that I am JEHOVAH, He who causeth to be, or bringeth into effect*; that he was as faithful in the performance of his promise, as he had been gracious in giving it, ver. 7. He now proceeded to manifest himself *Jehovah, He who causeth to be, or bringeth into effect*, and therefore in his subsequent declarations, he

frequently, by this very name, reminds them of what he had done or was doing; and in after times, when they had forgotten that he was *Jehovah*, he manifests it anew in his works of Judgement, or of Mercy, and declares in his threatenings and in his promises, *ye shall know that I am JEHOVAH, when I have done this unto you.* The instances of this are so numerous in the Old Testament, that we need only to open the book and they meet our eye.

The New Testament makes manifest to us that God created all things by Jesus Christ, that all things were upheld and consisted by him, and that whatsoever things God doth, he doth them by his Son; therefore as God said of the Angel who was to go with Moses and the Israelites, *my name is in him*: we might naturally expect to find the Official Titles, *Alehim*, and *Jehovah*, applied to our Lord in the Old Testament, accordingly they are with the greatest propriety applied to him, expressing the offices which he sustains, in several instances, not necessary to be specified, being so generally understood in reference to the Son of God.

Those names do not give us any instruction with respect to the *Essence* or *Substance of God*. These are technical terms which men have invented, in order to appear profoundly wise, and which only disguise, or more properly expose their ignorance. In the present state, we neither do nor can know any thing about the *Essence* or *Substance of God*, abstractly considered. All the knowledge which we are capable of receiving of the character of God, is only relative; thus, the expressions that Power, Wisdom, Goodness, &c. are essential to God, can only convey the ideas of what he is in relation to us, and to his other works. His Power, Wisdom and Goodness are over all his works.

“ In the New Testament, our Lord, who could not be mistaken; and his Apostles who were directed by the same spirit; when they introduce passages from the Old Testament, in which the Title *Alehim* occurs, generally express it in the singular by the Greek word *Theos*, a term said to be formed from a verb which signifies to put in order, to regulate.

The title Theos accords with the import of the Hebrew term, both expressing the idea of authority to place or bring into order, to regulate, to govern, and to judge, and both are very properly translated by the English word *God*, a term formed from, and expressing the idea of Goodness, the leading principle of the Divine Conduct.

“ The title, *God*, therefore appears to be a relative term, denoting *the rightful possessor of Divine Authority*, whether *original*, or *derived from the Original Source*. In the highest sense of the term it is one of the titles proper to the Supreme Being alone, whose power and authority must be Original, underived. The name *God*, therefore, when applied to *Him*, is never expressive of *derivation*.”\* Hence, our Lord Jesus Christ, who perfectly understood its import, styles the Father *The only true God*, John xvii. 3. *My God*, Chap. xx. 17. and the Apostle calls him *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus*

\* Letters, &c. Letter xxiii.



*Christ*, Ephes. i. 3. *The God of our Lord Jesus Christ*, verse 17. and in Heb. i. 9. applying to our Lord the expressions in the 45th psalm. *Thy God hath Anointed thee*. It is needless to cite more instances.

But the title *God* is obviously used in Scripture, likewise in a Secondary or inferior Sense, and is applied in that sense to those only whom the Only True God invested with authority, for the accomplishment of his wise and gracious purposes. When he gave authority to Moses he said, *See I have made thee a God to Pharaoh*. Ex. vii. 1. The Rulers and Judges of Israel, *to whom the word of God came*, and gave them Authority to rule and execute Judgement, *were called Gods*. John x. 34. 35. hence the command *Thou shalt not revile the Gods*. Ex. xxii. 28. The name seems to have been applied to Angels, Psalm xcvi. 7. 9. *Worship him all ye Gods*, compared with Heb. i. 6. *Let all the Angels of God worship him*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom *His God and Father hath given all Power in Heaven and in Earth, setting him over all the*

*works of his hands ; and giving him authority to execute Judgement also, because he is the Son of man, is, with the highest propriety, styled God over all. He, in the Character of Jehovah, is far exalted above all the Gods, whether men or angels. They had received their respective measures of the Oil of Gladness ; but his God hath anointed him with the Oil of Gladness above his fellows. The Father giveth him the Spirit not by measure. Therefore all the Gods are commanded to worship Him, to whom the title God, belongs in a degree immeasurably higher than any or all of them, and inferior only to his God and Father who hath anointed him, and given him the fulness of Power and Authority.*

LETTER V.

*On the Pre-existence of Christ.—The Socinian Scheme.*

OUR Lord, in Rev. iii. 14. claims the character of *The beginning of the Creation of God*. There is no more room to doubt that by this expression he meant that he really was *The beginning of the Creation of God*, than to doubt that by the other expression in the same verse, he really meant that he was *The Faithful and true Witness*. The testimony of the Apostle by the same spirit, Coloss. i. 15. 16. 17. is to the same purpose, where he styles him, *The Image of the Invisible God, the first born of every Creature*. This first born of every Creature is the Image of the invisible God, by possessing the

Power, the Authority, the whole of the Divine Fulness, with which it pleased the Father to invest him. This was the Glory which he had with the Father before the world was. That the Creation, and Government of all things were among the objects for which he was invested with this Divine fulness, appears from the Apostle's account, *For by him were all things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* Corresponding with this, in Eph. iii. 9. the same Apostle declares that *God created all things by Jesus Christ.* As he was the agent by whom God created all things, and was far exalted above all that was made; so he was appointed the Restorer of all things, that he might be the first in every thing; therefore says the Apostle, *He is the head of the body the Church; who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all he might have the pre-eminence.*

He was with his God and Father in the beginning, sustaining the character of *God*, through the Divine fulness with which he was filled for creating all things by him ; hence the Evangelist says, *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* John i. 1. 2. 3. No ambiguity arises from the title *God* being applied in a secondary sense to the word, for the reasons already mentioned, while the title *God* is applied in the highest sense to *the Father*, with whom the word was ; which distinction is indicated in the text ; where *the Father* is particularly distinguished by the appellation *ton theon, The God*, by way of peculiar pre-eminence, as the original fountain of Divine Authority ; which is still further manifested in the rest of the chapter. There is not even the most distant idea through the whole, of *one God being in company with another God, to whom he was in every respect perfectly equal, and*

*each of them infinite in being and perfections. The world was made by him. The same word here spoken of was in due time made flesh and dwelt among men, in the character of the only begotten of the Father. He was acknowledged to be the Son of God, the King of Israel. He was in the form of God, before he took upon him the form of a Servant. Philip. ii. 6. The Apostle intimates that he esteemed not for himself the coveted thing, the being as God (which is said to be the true sense of the passage) but in obedience to the will of his God and Father, emptied himself of that Glory which he had before the world was. He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his Poverty might become rich, 2 Cor. viii. 9. is another testimony by the Divine Spirit, that our Lord was in possession of Riches and Power before he came in the flesh. His own testimony, John xvii. 4. 5. is so plain as not to be easily misunderstood. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world*

*was.* One would hardly think it possible for a Christian to read these words of Christ without having his mind strongly impressed with the belief of our Lord's existence in glory before the Heavens and the Earth were created. In Heb. i. 10. 11. 12. the Apostle teaches us that the 102d Psalm from the middle of the 24th verse, is the declaration of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in answer to the prayer of his Son. He had said, *O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.* The answer was, *Thy years are throughout all generations. Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands, &c.* Thus the Power and Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ is abundantly manifested in the Scriptures, as the *Root and Lord of David*, before he came in the flesh as *David's Son*. The general phraseology which the Sacred writers were led to make use of, perfectly harmonises with the doctrine of our Lord's possessing the fulness of Divine perfection before he came in the flesh, and of his condescending to empty

himself thereof in obedience to his Father's will, in order that he might revive us from death, that we might be replenished with all the fulness of God. Hence we are led to an easy and satisfactory understanding of many of our Lord's expressions, which in any other view it would surely be no easy matter to comprehend ; for instance, John viii. 58. *Before Abraham was, I am* ; John xvii. 24. *Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world* ; Rev. i. 11. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, &c.*

Contemplating these concurrent testimonies, which are in perfect harmony with the whole of the Scriptures ; it would seem to be a very mistaken view of the subject, which has led to the adoption of the *Socinian Scheme*. Possibly indeed it may have been occasioned at first by the *Trinitarian hypothesis* ; for it has sometimes happened that one extreme has been the occasion of another. The doctrine of the Trinity, probably arising from a misdirected zeal to exalt the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, beyond what he himself claims, or the Scriptures ever



ascribe to him, attempts even an impossible height, which by its very excess defeats itself, and involves its advocates in inextricable embarrassments ; until perplexed with the inconsistencies of the subject, they must confess it to be incomprehensible. It is very possible that rational thinking men, (who too often have been more accustomed to compare and philosophize upon Theological systems, than simply to seek information concerning the things of God from his testimony, for their own spiritual benefit) startled by the inconsistencies of that doctrine, resolved to keep at as great distance from it as possible, without altogether giving up with the profession of Christianity, and therefore got into the opposite extreme. Considering our Lord Jesus Christ simply as a man, the Son of Joseph and Mary, in the common acceptation of the term ; without any thing extraordinary respecting his origin ; and that he had no existence before he became the Son of Joseph and Mary. That God gave him some extraordinary powers, as he had formerly given to Moses and to some

other men ; but that he stood in no other or higher relation to God than other men, who had been occasionally made useful as teachers of or examples to others. That God raised him from the dead, as he will raise all mankind from the dead ; and will judge the world by him at the last day.

In order to give stability to this Scheme, much of what is called learning and ingenuity have been employed to explain many passages of Scripture in subserviency to it, in a sense very different from that which, to a simple student of Divine Truth, would appear to be the plainest and most obvious meaning of the Scriptures. For instance, the account of our Lord's conception, recorded in the first chapter of Matthew, and the first chapter of Luke, is rejected, not by all, but by many of the advocates of this Scheme, as fabulous ; which a plain inquirer, who was desirous of learning the things of God from the Scriptures, would esteem *the Record of Truth*. Our Lord's prayer to the Father, John xvii. 5. that he would restore him to the

glory which he had with him before the world was ; and his testimony, *Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world*, verse 24. are considered as expressing that God, before the foundation of the world, *purposed or intended to glorify, and designed to love Jesus Christ* ; and not that our Lord refers to any former *glory really possessed, or love of God really enjoyed by him, before the world was*. A simple Christian, whose mind was not led by Theological Systems, would be likely to believe that our Lord in his address to the Father, *really meant what he said*, and expressed what was *strictly and literally true* ; and that his own testimony proved the truth of what was spoken of him in the eighth chapter of Solomon's Proverbs, under the character of Wisdom. His having been *rich, and for our sakes becoming poor, that we through his poverty might become rich*, 2 Cor. viii. 9. is considered either as a mistake of the Apostle, or at most, that it only intimates his restraining the power of working miracles, which God had given him ; whilst the Scriptures would lead us to understand it

as denoting, his *emptying himself of that fulness of Divine Power and Authority, which he formerly possessed*, and which belonged to the *Form of God* in which he had been; in order that he might take upon him *the form of a servant*, and be *obedient unto the death*, that we might be restored by *the Spirit of Power and Love*, to that *Image of God* from which we had fallen. *Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands*, which the Apostle, Heb. i. 10. considers as the answer of the Father to the Son, is viewed as the Apostle having entirely mistaken the meaning of the 102d Psalm, whereas the Apostle obviously introduces this as part of his Superiority over all things, which he upholdeth by the word of his Power. Jesus saying that he *came from the Father and came into the world, and again leaving the world, and going to the Father*, is considered only as his having received a commission from God, and that he is to render an account to God, of his conduct in that commission. The meaning of this saying, John xvi.

28. appears very obviously to be that which the Lord expressed ; the disciples understood it so ; saying, ver. 30. *by this we believe that thou comest forth from God.* If our minds are simple, and not warped by philosophical or theological systems, we would very naturally conclude that he was as truly with the Father before he came forth from him, as he was to be with the Father after he returned to him. His being *the first born of every creature, by whom all things were created ; that he was before all things, and by him all things consist ;* is considered as representing him, not as the Scripture testifies that *God created all things by Jesus Christ,* considered as applicable to the material universe ; but only *that he is the head of the new creation ; that all are created anew by him, in a moral point of view.* This is the truth in part ; but not the whole truth. It is true that he is the head of the New Creation, and equally true that the New Creation, though not yet perfected will be accomplished by him in the most universal sense ; but this alone would be an incom-

plete view of his dignity ; therefore, the Apostle shews, in the most explicit manner, that all things were originally created in him, through him, and for him ; and he is before and above all these things, which are holden together in and by him : those who abode not voluntarily in him are yet subject to his power, and though like sheep, they have gone astray, wandering every one after his own way, yet he will at last recover them and reconcile them by himself unto God ; which is the very reason why *all fulness dwells in him*. With this view *he is the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the first born from the dead, that he should be the first in all things*. Hence, we are led to contemplate the connection between all things having been created in him, and for him, and all things being recovered, reconciled, and restored unto God by him ; for though we see not yet all things willingly subject to him, the work is begun ; and as sure as God is true, so surely will our Lord carry on the work till every lost sheep be found, and replaced in the true fold, under the

Good Shepherd, who gave his soul for them. The celebrated passage in the first chapter of the gospel by John, is considered by the Socinian Scheme as descriptive of *the Wisdom of God*, as well as the eighth chapter of Proverbs; as it is elsewhere said, *The Lord by Wisdom hath founded the earth, by understanding hath he stretched out the Heavens*. This is certainly true. Is it any disparagement of this truth, to say that this *Wisdom of God* was in and manifested by *Jesus Christ*? do we know any instances in which the Wisdom, the Love, the Power, or any of the perfections of God are manifested, or possible to be known without a medium or agent? and who so proper to be the agent for manifesting or exerting the Divine Wisdom, as He *in whom all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge are laid up*? He, who, because of the Divine fulness which dwells in him, is said to be *of God made unto us Wisdom*? It is said however, that these things are spoken of him after his resurrection. True; and these very things which are spoken of Him after his resurrection, were equally

true of Him before he took upon him the form of a servant. They were constituent parts of that *form of God* in which he was, before *he emptied himself, that he might be made in all things like unto his brethren*, in order to recover them. Was then the emptying himself of *Wisdom and Power*, part of his being made in all things like unto his brethren? Yes; most certainly. When they were originally created *in Him*, and while they abode in him who is *the Truth*; they must have enjoyed a participation of Divine Wisdom and Power; of which Adam was afterwards an outward or earthly manifestation; for nothing can come from God as his original work which is originally defective or imperfect in its kind. From this state it was only possible for them to fall by the perversion of their will. They fell into vanity, ignorance, and weakness, *becoming alienated from the Life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts and darkened understanding*. In order to recover them from the wickedness, enmity to God, and consequent misery into which



they were fallen, it became needful that our Lord should voluntarily empty himself of his glorious dignity, and place himself in all their situations, sin only excepted, *that he might be a merciful and faithful high Priest in the things of God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* Hence he is represented as *increasing in Wisdom, learning obedience, and being made perfect through Sufferings*; until, having finished the work which the Father gave him to do, he was, according to his prayer, *restored to the glorious dignity which he had with the Father before the world was.* When, therefore, we read in the beginning of John's Gospel, *In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. That the world was made by him. That the word was made flesh and dwelt among men*; There is in reality no more difficulty in understanding the term, *The Word*, as a title given to Jesus Christ, on account of *declaring or revealing*

*the Father*, than there is in understanding the phrase, *The Lamb of God*, applied as a title to him in the same chapter, on account of his *taking away the sins of the world*. When we read in the 36th verse that John, *looking upon Jesus as he walked*, said, *Behold the Lamb of God*; no kind of doubt arises in our minds about the epithet being intended for and applied to Jesus; yet we could no more suppose Jesus to be literally *a lamb*, than we could suppose him to be literally *a word*; but that both are titles, properly expressive of his office and character.

The principal, indeed, the only reason assigned by the Socinian Scheme for denying the application of the phrase, *The Word*, as a title to Jesus Christ, is because the Greek Philosophers, and Poets, and the early writers who professed Christianity, (which was soon corrupted by the false philosophy of the Greeks,) used the Greek word *Logos* signifying *word* or *speech*, without meaning thereby *a person*; but only *speech*, or *discourse*. This is surely true; and it is equally true that in the common use of the words

*Lamb* or *Lion*, they did not thereby mean *a man* ; but they not unfrequently applied the names of those animals, as is still often done, to individual men, as descriptive of their characters ; and such things occasion no kind of difficulty, because they are in common and daily use. After all, it might very reasonably suggest a doubt of the propriety of the reasoning, however plausible, when recourse is had to *Idolatrous Heathens* for interpreting the *Oracles of God*. *If the world by wisdom knew not God* ; is it the best way of understanding *the things of God*, to seek the interpretation of the *Sacred Record* either from those who had no corresponding ideas, or from those, who being corrupted from the Simplicity of Christianity, *had their understandings darkened* ? for this was early the case with many of the professors of Christianity, whose testimony in other things, Socinians would reject, as inadmissible. The only safe and really satisfactory explanation of Scripture, will be found to be in the Scripture itself, and however serviceable many other things, particularly obser-

vations on the ancient customs, manners, and climates of the Eastern nations may be *for the illustrations of allusions*, the interpretations of Doctrines will be best found by *comparing Scripture with Scripture*; and if this method were more generally and more honestly followed, many of the seeming difficulties would entirely disappear.

One principal consideration for which the Socinian Scheme endeavours to invalidate the application of the title, *The Word*, to Jesus Christ, is because it is said that *The word was God*, and it is supposed that this would go towards the establishment of a *plurality of Gods*. But admitting that it is *Wisdom*, that is here spoken of; this would not obviate the difficulty; for from the scope of the chapter it would still appear that *Wisdom was with God and was God*, that the same *Wisdom was made flesh*, and was *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world*, and in fact was *Jesus Christ himself*. The difficulty of admitting the testimony of the Spirit of God to be heard in the expressions,

and meaning in which God intended to communicate himself to mankind to be understood, lest such phraseology should inculcate the notion of two Gods, is only a seeming, but not a real difficulty. It has already been noticed that the title *God* is with the highest propriety applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this is so far from derogating from the dignity of *the God and Father of our Lord*, that it is the highest manifestation of the Glory, both of *the only True God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*. Many of the advocates for this scheme, as well as those for the Trinity have been men of great learning and ingenuity; many of both have been, and are, excellent Christians; precious in the sight of God, and distinguished as the followers of Christ, by the sincerity of their hearts, and the holiness of their lives; for the spirit and practice of holiness and obedience to Jesus Christ, which are the most substantial evidences of true Christianity, are often found in persons who have adopted mistaken opinions, though their mistakes are unprofitable. All of

them have the same interest in knowing and obeying the truth, as those who have been delivered from the mistakes of both Schemes; and surely the Christians among both classes, though mistaken and misled, are as honest and as sincere, so far as they understand the truth, as those who have more simple and satisfactory views of the Divine Record. It is not the object of this sketch to cast reflections on Societies or on individuals, many of whom are of those whom God approveth; but by comparing these Schemes with the Divine Testimony, to invite Christians to leave the dogmas and traditions of men, and attend to the teaching of God himself in the Scriptures of Truth; that they may enjoy more purely the precious consolations which result from the clear and simple understanding of Divine Truth, and be led to a more uniform and consistent obedience to the Divine Will, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, whose office is to lead the humble followers of Jesus Christ into *all the truth*, both with respect to Doctrine and Practice.

LETTER VI.

*On the Name of Jesus, and Life through his Name.*

THE ancient Christians *believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and believing, they had Life through his Name.* As He is the same now, that he was in their day ; *neither is there Salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved :* It will be a profitable exercise for our own minds, to contemplate with gratitude, *the Name, the Characters and Offices, which our Lord Jesus sustains ; the work which He accomplishes ; the Life which believers have through his name ; and the way in which they receive and are kept in that Life.*

The Character of our Lord was intimated by the name *Jesus*, which signifies *Saviour*, or rather *Restorer*; this was the reason assigned for the name, Matt. i. 21. *Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall SAVE (OR RATHER RESTORE) his people from their sins.* This name was declared before he was conceived, compare Luke i. 31. and ii. 21. The Angels announced the same thing to the Shepherds as *good tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, A SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST THE LORD.* In the third chapter of Acts, the Apostle Peter, explaining to the Jews, the covenant made with Abraham, and the nature of that blessedness wherewith all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed in the promised seed, thus expresses it in verse 26. *Unto you first, God having raised up his Son JESUS, (the Restorer,) hath sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* The character of *Saviour*, or *Restorer*, was, with peculiar propriety and graciousness, adapted by Infinite Wisdom to



the condition of mankind in their fallen state. His work and its issue were exhibited in the former dispensations, by a variety of figures and declarations, which united in testifying *that through his NAME; whoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

He is *the Revealer of the Father*, according to his own testimony, Matth. xi. 27. Luke x. 22. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* It was *His Spirit* in the Prophets which testified of his Coming, Sufferings, and following Glory. When He came he was *that prophet* of whom Moses truly said unto the Fathers, *A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your Brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.* As the alienation of mankind from the Life of God, through the ignorance that is in them because of *the blindness of their hearts*, resulted from having *the understanding darkened*; so *The Restorer* was to effect their re-

covery unto the *renewal of the Life of God in them* by *Revealing the Father* that they might put on the *New man*, which is *renewed in Knowledge* after the Image of Him that created him. No man ever did, or ever will become a *real Christian* in any other way than by *the Son revealing the Father in him*, giving *the knowledge of the Holy which is understanding*. Hence, *This Prophet, the Apostle of God*, was anointed to *open the blind eyes*, that they should see out of obscurity and out of darkness, and to *unstop the ears of the deaf*, that they should hear the words of the Book. Therefore he *brings forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears, causes the dead to hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear do live*; are quickened from that state of *death in sin*, whereby the *Life of God* was extinguished in them. Whilst by his *public testimony* he declares the Character, Will, and Gracious Purposes, of the Father, he gives to those who hear his voice, and believe his testimony, *that anointing* which teaches them the spiritual understanding of all things, and which

by abiding, as *the Truth* in them, keeps them abiding in him, and teaches them the knowledge of *the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent*, in whom the fulness of their Life is treasured up. Thus restoring them by the Spirit of Love to *dwell in God* and become *temples of the Living God*. Through his Prophetic Character, therefore, the people who dwelt in darkness are made to see great light; and through the record which God hath given of his Son, they believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and, believing, they have Life through his Name*.

He is represented in the Character of a *Purifier*, Mal. iii. 2---4. *He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old, and as in former years.* How exactly does this agree with *turning away every one of them from*

his iniquities ! Again, Isai. i. 25. *I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away all thy dross, and take away all thy tin,* compare verse 16—18. Again, Isai. iv. 4. *The Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, and purge away the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of Judgement, and by the spirit of burning,* compare Chap. xxvii. 9. and in Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness and from all your Idols will I cleanse you.* To these declarations correspond all the washings, sprinklings, and various purifications appointed by the Law ; all of which shadowed forth the cleansing of mankind from moral pollution ; or as the Apostle expresses it, *making perfect as pertaining to the conscience.* Such is the general scope of the Old Testament, respecting the office and work of the *Anointed Restorer, whom God hath exalted with his right hand a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* The New Testament, which presents to our view the Church, as *the first*

*fruits to God and to the Lamb, the earnest of the general harvest; informs us that Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, Ephes. v. 25, 26. Accordingly the apostles, preaching salvation to all mankind through the name of Jesus, testify that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance; Acts xxvi. 20. John testifies, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, I John i. 9. therefore Paul declares, He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit. iii. 5, 6. To the Corinthians, he says, Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; and upon this very principle, calls upon them to keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Hence it appears, that the*

purification accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ, in those who believe in his name, is the removal of *moral pollution*, thereby cleansing from *an evil conscience*; it is also *the purification of the heart*, the source of defilement, from all its filthiness and *evil thoughts*; from its making a traffic and gain of affected godliness, for the gratification of the selfish principle. Every operation of the purifier is the process of death.—A mortal stroke to the *old man*. The strong holds of self congratulation; the vain imaginations, and proud reasonings, which exalt themselves against the true knowledge of God; the pride of knowledge that puffeth up—every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.—There can be no agreement of the temple of God with *these idols*, nor with any other idols.—The fellers of oxen and sheep,—the tables of the money-changers—the seats of those that sold doves—every one who laboured, in the earthly temple, however plausibly, to make the external services of religion subservient to their worldly,

gain—to the service of mammon—were driven out by the scourge of small cords in the hand of him whose heart burned with zeal for the purity of *the house of God*, that he might recover it from being *a den of thieves*, and restore it to its original destination—*The house of prayer*. Do we ask the meaning of this symbolical action? The apostle tells us—*Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*, 1 Cor. iii. 16 : again—*Whose house are we*, Heb. iii. 6. The former served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things—this is *the house—the temple* which our Lord is zealous to cleanse from the hidden things of dishonesty, that he may restore it to the purity of its pristine state, its original destination; that it may again become *The House of Prayer*. The Apostle saith these things of the Church; but in order that the church may be Holy as *The House of God*, it must not be built of unholy materials. As the stones of Solomon's Temple were all prepared for their respective places before they were brought thither, so the individu-

als in the spiritual house are brought unto Him, *The living stone*, that, partaking of His life, and being prepared by Him, they also *as lively stones*, may be built up a *spiritual House*,—an *Habitation of God through the Spirit*. As the church; the first fruits to God and to the Lamb is an image and earnest of the general in-gathering of all unto God, and of the spirit and principles by which all the wheat will be brought into the garner; so each individual christian, in the process of cleansing by which the Lord purifies him, is an image and earnest of the church, and of the spirit of holiness, and principle of purity and love by which the church is built up *an habitation fit for God to dwell and walk in*.

In the character of the Purifier, the followers of Jesus are made to know him and his work in them; *they believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and believing, they have life through his name*.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the *Light of the World*. *I am come, a light into the world*, said



he, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness, John xii. 46. We are given to understand by a special message, that *God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all*, 1 John i. 5. *Light* is an emanation flowing from *The Father of Light*, James i. 17, and as *with him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning*, light constantly flows from him, whether we receive it or not. The sun always shines—why do we not always enjoy the light? Because by the intervention of clouds, or other bodies which obstruct it, we are darkened and prevented from enjoying the light. The prophet seems to express the spirit of this idea, Isaiah lix. 2. *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you.* In the figurative style of the scriptures *Light* is an emblem of that right understanding and love of the character, designs, and ways of God, which preserve or purify the heart; and whereby the Divine Spirit unites the creature to God in a perfect submission and voluntary resignation to the Divine

will, which is the highest felicity of which creatures are susceptible. *Darkness*, on the contrary, is emblematic of alienation from this life of God, ignorance of and enmity to the divine character, purposes, and ways, producing wickedness, hence called, *works of darkness*; and connected with misery as its natural consequence.

There seems to be some reason for supposing that when God first created mankind (who are the subjects of our present consideration) he created them by and in Jesus Christ; pure, holy, spiritual, like himself; and while they kept their first estate, and left not their own habitation, abiding in him who is *the Light*; *Darkness was not*; but when they fell by transgression from their original purity, *darkness* was the natural consequence of their sin, which hid the face of God from them; the external state of the world, corresponding with the spiritual state of mankind, would become desolate, waste, and shrouded in darkness.—This is precisely that condition of the earth to which, the

Divine Spirit calls our attention in the beginning of Genesis.

But it was not the will of our Heavenly Father that any of his offspring should be left finally to perish in this deplorable state to which their transgression had reduced them. As he had created them in and for Jesus Christ, so he had compassion on them; *grace was given them in Christ Jesus, and life promised in him before the world began, or before the times of the ages.* Created spiritual, pure, and holy, they had become degraded by their own sins, and were placed in Adam; that they might be brought under a course of discipline and instruction for their recovery from *darkness to light* by Jesus Christ, who came a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in him *should not abide in darkness.*

The moving of the Spirit of God on the face of the deep was connected with the light revisiting the earth by the word of God. God said, *Light be—and Light was.* This light flowed from the sun; though the sun was not yet distinctly visible, the dusky

atmosphere gradually dispersing, till the fourth day, when the splendor of the sun became in some degree visible, and in the night the moon and stars might be seen; but it was not till the sixth day, when man was made in the image of God, with his spouse formed of his bone and flesh, that the glorious harmony of the works of God shone conspicuous.

Is not this recorded progressive state of things, admirably calculated to exhibit, in emblem, the openings of Divine benignity to mankind, flowing from *The Sun of Righteousness*, and gradually brightening, till he arose with healing on his wings? does it not lead us to contemplate with wonder and gratitude, the energy and progress of the Word and Spirit of God, until the relation between Christ and his church shall be more distinctly manifested at the marriage of the Lamb?

The sacred record bears witness with respect to every individual of mankind, that they are *in darkness* as the consequence of transgression. *Having the understanding darkened,*

being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, Ephes. iv. 18; therefore they walk in the vanity of their minds. The understanding being *darkened*, obviously implies that the understanding was formerly *full of light*; as being *alienated from the life of God*, presupposes the individual to have been in the enjoyment of *spiritual life*, before this alienation took place. This darkness and alienation arise from that *ignorance* which is caused by their hearts being *blinded* through their transgression. When God, by the joint energy of his word and spirit, recovers those who *like sheep had gone astray*, and causes them to *return to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls*, he turns them *from darkness to light*, by shining into their hearts to give them *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*; thus *enlightening the eyes of their understanding, he reconciles them to himself by Jesus Christ*. The very idea of the *reconciliation* of any man to God, necessarily implies that the same individual must

formerly have loved God with all his heart; from which state he had turned away by transgressing the law of love; for where love has not been interrupted or destroyed, reconciliation is not only needless, but in the nature of the thing, impossible. *This reconciliation is the work of God*, which he is effecting by him who is *the true light, that came into the world to enlighten every man*, John i. 9. Hence our Lord calls upon men to *believe in the light*, that they may be *the children of the light*, John xii. 36. It is he who maketh *the eyes of the blind to see out of obscurity and out of darkness*. It is in him that *the people who sat in darkness have seen great light*, and *those who sat in the region of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined*: compare Isai. ix. 2. with Math. iv. 16. according to the promises of God by the prophets, in which the anointed was promised as *a light to the nations, to open the blind eyes*. The apostles accordingly consider christians as *the children of light*; formerly indeed in a state of darkness, but now light in the Lord, translated

*into the marvellous light of the Lord.* And as the prevalence of external darkness corresponded with the darkened state of the hearts and understandings of men, and afterwards the alternations of light with partial darkness indicated the condition of mankind in a state of begun recovery; so when this recovery shall be completed, by the reconciliation of all enemies unto God through Jesus Christ, when *the darkness of the understanding shall be completely removed by him who came to enlighten every man,* external darkness will also completely cease; he who *is light and in whom there is no darkness at all,* will cause his face to shine upon them in the spirit of that blessing wherewith Aaron and his sons were to bless the children of Israel, Numb. vi. 24, 25, 26. *The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.* The followers of Jesus are made to know him as the *true light who enlighteneth them;* delivering them from darkness—

from death in trespasses and sins. They know him as *the quickening spirit*, who restores to them that *divine life* which they had lost: who brings them into his marvellous light, in which he blesses and keeps them. *Their iniquities which had separated between them and their God; their sins which had hid his face from them*, being taken away; *the Lord makes his face to shine upon them, and is gracious unto them*, in opening to them and in them *the unsearchable riches of Christ*.—*Makes them full of joy with the light of his countenance*; and gives them *the peace of God which passeth understanding*, to keep their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is *the good Shepherd*, John x. 11. *I am the good Shepherd, the good Shepherd giveth his soul for the sheep*. This character of Jesus was foretold by the prophets. *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*, Isai. iv. 11. *I will set up one shepherd over them, my servant David, he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd*, Ezek. xxxiv. 23. Mankind are compared to sheep; they were created in



Jesus Christ; and while they abode in the good pasture they enjoyed the blessedness of the good Shepherd's love; but every individual of them, like sheep, went astray; they turned every one to his own way. Sheep do not go astray by proxy, but in their individual capacity, and as individuals they must be brought back. The love of the good Shepherd towards the flock which his Father had given him, was not destroyed by their going astray; but he emptied himself of the glorious dignity which he formerly possessed, that he might follow them through all their wanderings until he should find and recover them. For this purpose he voluntarily condescended to enter into all the degrees of distress into which they had brought themselves by going astray from him, and even passed through death itself on their account; not that they should not come under distress and death, but that he might open a way through sufferings and death for their recovery; and that he might make these sufferings and death, means in his hand for promot-

ing the recovery of his flock from all their wanderings, and from the consequences of their going astray.

As a shadow of this, though necessarily a faint one, God had placed the children of Israel in the good land which was blessed with the blessings of the Lord, and while they abode in his statutes they enjoyed these blessings; but when they rebelled against the Lord they were cast out of this good land; not however till grace was given them, and a return promised; and in the whole of the dealings of God with them, by his servants whom he sent unto them, it appears that he still loved them, and kept his covenant and mercy for them, and declared that *the deliverer should come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* And all his judgments upon them, however severe, were so many evidences of his waiting that he might be gracious unto them, and that *as a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his scattered sheep, so he would seek out his sheep, and would deliver them*

out of all places where they had been scattered in the cloudy and dark day, Ezek. xxxiv. 12. For Israel had not been forsaken, nor Judah, of his God, of the Lord of Hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel, Jer. li. 5. So the good Shepherd came, not only to that people to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but he himself says, *Other sheep have I which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd,* John x. 16. All mankind had forsaken *the way of God*, and had turned, every one to *his own way*. They did not *ask for the old path, where is the good way, to walk therein, that they should find rest for their souls; but they said, we will not walk therein,* Jer. vi. 16. But they were not to be so given up. Our merciful Father had determined to bring them again to *his way*. *I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life,* said our Lord, John xiv. 6. *No man cometh unto the Father but by me.* It appears probable that Moses had in view the

Restorer in this character, when he said, *If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now THY WAY, that I may know THEE*, Exod. xxxiii. 16. When men are drawn to the Son, they find him *the way to the Father*, and it is only by seeing the Son and believing on him whom God hath sent, that they are made to know the only true God. The prophet Isaiah seems also to refer to the same character of the Messiah, chap. xxxv. 8, 9, 10. *The way of holiness, in which the unclean shall not be found, nor any ravenous beast, but the redeemed shall walk there. Hence the way of the Lord, the way of Life, and emphatically, The Way, are so often spoken of in the Old Testament, which testified beforehand the coming, sufferings, and glory of Christ, as the things which many prophets and righteous men earnestly desired to see. In the ancient œconomy, which was a figure of the spiritual, the ordinary way of access to the presence of God was through the official ministrations of the priesthood. The offerings and sacrifices were accepted when brought accord-*

ing to the Divine appointment, and properly presented by the priest, by whom also the prayers and praises of the worshippers were presented in the holiest within the veil; and the priest, having presented them with blood and incense before the mercy seat, returned, as the medium of intercourse, to bless the worshippers. In the New Testament we are instructed to offer *spiritual sacrifices* through the Lord Jesus. He himself has given us to understand, that our prayers and praises, in his name, come with acceptance before God. He is the great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, the proper antitype of the high priests under the law; who has entered not into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. The apostle testifies that we have boldness and confidence through the faith of him in coming to the throne of grace to seek mercy, and find grace to help us in the time of need, and adds that we have *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, BY A NEW AND LIVING WAY,

which he hath consecrated for us through *the veil, that is to say, his flesh*, Heb. x. 19, 20. Hence he styles himself, *The Way*; and adds, *No man cometh unto the Father but by me.* The apostle, in confirmation, says, *There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in his own proper times.* Thus we are led to contemplate Jesus as the only medium of intercourse between God and man; for communicating to mankind the knowledge of all the divine perfections, in their unceasing gracious operations towards the human race; and by the Holy Spirit which he sends, shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts, and giving unto them repentance and remission of sins; presenting their repentance, their confessions, their prayers and praises with acceptance before God; pleading for them, as their Advocate and Intercessor; and finally bringing them back to their Father, and their God, before whom they are *made accepted in the Beloved.* — *He feeds his flock like a shepherd. He carries*

*the Lambs in his bosom. He sympathises with the weak and sick, strengthening them according to their needs, and binds up the lame and broken in heart, that he may recover all who have gone astray, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Thus will they present their bodies a living sacrifice, devoted to God as those that are made alive from the dead.*

## LETTER VII.

*The same Subject continued.*

## MELCHISEDEC.

**M**OSESES relates in Gen. xiv. 18, 19, 20, that *Melchisedek king of Salem, meeting Abram returning from the slaughter of the kings, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the Priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.* We do not find his name mentioned again in the Old Testament but only in the cxth Psalm, verse 4th, *The Lord hath sworn*



*and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.*

It is in the New Testament that we find the mystery of Melchisedek unfolded. In the epistle to the Hebrews the apostle explains the design of this historical figure, as a type of the kingly and priestly offices united in our Lord Jesus Christ; when, after his resurrection from the dead, he was set down on the right hand of God; saluted a priest upon his throne; holding the counsel of peace. In Heb. vii. the apostle properly observes, that Melchisedec signifies, *first by interpretation, King of Righteousness*, and as such was a glorious type of *him who of God is made unto us righteousness*; with whom *the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness*, and who is emphatically styled *The Just and Righteous One*. The prophetic declarations that *he should reign in righteousness*, and that he should be celebrated as *our Righteousness*, abound in the Old Testament. And the divine spirit in the New Testament testifies of *His Righteousness*, when he went to the Father,

and was no more to be known after the flesh. Melchisedek was *afterwards king of Salem, which is king of Peace.* A strong figure of him who is *The Prince of Peace.* As *the fruit of righteousness is peace;* so the peaceful kingdom of our Lord naturally results from his being king of righteousness. Hence he is emphatically styled *Our Peace.* He gives us *peace towards God,* and, shedding abroad in our hearts the *spirit of peace, even his peace;* he destroys that malice and hatred which separates man from man; and *reconciles all, Jews and Gentiles, unto God in one collective body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.* But we never can be made partakers of *his peace,* without being partakers of his righteousness. Hence the operation of the Divine Spirit and Word, administered by him, fulfils in us the righteousness of the law, by not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit; without which it is impossible for us to be freed from the law of sin and death, and delivered from condemnation; therefore *the wisdom which is from above is first*

pure—then peaceable—productive of heavenly spiritual fruits, and *the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace*; in distinction from *the wisdom that is from beneath*, which is *earthly, sensual, devilish, full of envying and strife*, and resulting in *confusion and every evil work*.

Melchisedek brought forth for Abraham and his followers bread and wine to refresh them, and increase their strength and spirits—How strikingly typical of him who gives *the living bread* to those engaged in the good fight of faith, and promises *The hidden manna* to those who overcome! of him who gives them *wine and milk without money and without price!* who gives them *the spirit of the living God*, so that they can do all things through *Christ who strengtheneth them*; for *they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength*, and progress till they appear before God in Zion. This is the work of our Lord in his glorified state; for it was after his God and Father had said, *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*; that he constituted him a priest by the

word of the oath. When Jehovah had promised to *send the rod of his strength out of Zion*, by which he should *rule in the midst of his enemies*; in consequence of which, his people, who were his enemies, and in open rebellion, should voluntarily submit themselves; *becoming willing in the day of his power*. The *day of his power* is the period during which *he must reign until he hath brought all enemies to his footstool*; and this subjection of all his enemies to him is impossible to be any thing short of voluntary submission; for all the creation, whether willingly or not, have long been necessarily subject to the absolute power and control of him to whom *all power in heaven and in earth is given*. It is not possible, therefore, that there can be any kind of subjection remaining to be accomplished but one; that is the subjection of the heart and will to him; and this is included in the promise, *thy people shall be WIL-LING in the day of thy power*. Jehovah was pleased to add, *In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, thou hast (or shalt have)*

*the dew of thy youth.* Does not this part of the promise intimate, that when all his people are thus restored; purified from every stain; sparkling in the beauties of spiritual holiness, as at their first creation, when the morning stars sang together; *The Righteous Branch* shall shine forth resplendent in his pristine glory, adorned with his numberless children as at the first; as the young and vigorous vegetable is adorned with the pellucid drops of the morning dew? As every drop of dew, though transparent and colourless in itself, yet exhibits the rays of light in all the tints of the rainbow; so mankind, recovered and united to Christ, like the dew-drops on the tender plant, having no tincture in themselves, yet through the light of the Sun of Righteousness shining in them, every one will exhibit the inimitable token of the Divine Covenant.—The thought is so exquisitely beautiful as infinitely to transcend the most exalted of human conceptions. It could only be suggested by the Spirit of God, and leaves the sublimest flights of the sublimest Poets at

an immeasurable distance. This is the change which he is waiting for at the right hand of God, Heb. x. 13, *From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.* It is true we see not yet all things put under him; we see not yet that universal subjection of the heart and will to him, which can only be voluntary; and therefore he waiteth that he may be gracious to them, when they become capable of tasting that the Lord is gracious. But we see Jesus, who was made a little while lower than the angels, that he by the grace of God might taste death for every one, now crowned with glory and honour, exalted at God's right hand, saluted a Priest (*σις του αιωνα*) to the age, after the similitude of Melchisedec.

Melchisedec blessed Abraham, saying *Blessed be Abraham of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.* This, in the figurative style of the Old Testament, was the mode of communicating to Abraham, through the priest of the Most High God, the fulness of heavenly and earthly blessings, as far as he was at the time.

capable of receiving them.—A striking type of *Him* in whom is vested *All power in heaven and in earth*, and in whom *All fulness dwells*, for the express purpose of being communicated to all who *walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham*. Thus Jesus, the Antitype of Melchisedec the king of Salem, blesses the subjects of his kingdom, by communicating to them, in his official character as their great High Priest, the fulness of heavenly blessings from his God and their God, according to their needs, and their capacity of receiving; and increases this capacity by spiritualizing their earthly blessings, that they may perceive therein the love and the hand of their heavenly Father, and of their High Priest, who watches over, and is ever present with them. He added, *Blessed be the Most High God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand*. Thus leading him to contemplate the victory which he had obtained as not being the fruit of his own strength or wisdom, but as the work of God, giving him, through the medium of this earthly figure, a view of that

spiritual victory which his faith should obtain, through the promised seed, who makes all his followers *more than conquerors through his love*. Abraham accordingly understood it in this view; and presented to the priest a tenth of the spoils, as a thank-offering for the victory, and an acknowledgment to the Most High God that every good and perfect gift flowed from him, expressing thereby his gratitude and devotedness to the Most High God. In the New Testament the apostle thus expresses the sentiment,—*Thanks to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. xv. 57. *These Spiritual sacrifices are offered up to God acceptably through Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.*

Melchisedec is said to be *without father, without mother, without descent; having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually*. From these expressions some have concluded that he was the Son of God himself, made manifest to Abraham; but there is nothing in the text



which appears to countenance this idea. He was *made like unto the Son of God*; this at once shews that he was designed as a lively type of the Son of God; his *abiding a priest continually*, or so long as he lived, was a figure of the abiding priesthood of Christ. The first part of 3d verse appears obviously intended to contrast the priesthood of Melchisedec with that of the family of Aaron, who succeeded one another according to their genealogy. When one high-priest died, another succeeded according to his parentage, and dying in his turn, left the office to his successors. But Melchisedec received not his priesthood by succession from his ancestors, nor left others to succeed in his office; in which respect he was *made like unto the Son of God*; which could not have been the case, literally understood; for it is not literally true of the Son of God that he was *without father, without mother, without genealogy*: but it is strictly true of him that he derives not his priesthood by succession from deceased ancestors, nor leaves it to any successors in office; but *because he con-*

*tinueth ever, he hath an unchangeable priesthood.* The priesthood of Christ, of which the apostle here speaks, was that for which he was preparing while he was on earth; but he could not begin to exercise his office till he was set down on the right hand of God, *having entered by his own blood, not into the holy places made with hands, which were figures of the true; but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us.* That such was the meaning of the apostle, appears from his stating, that the *descent or genealogy of Melchisedec was not counted from ancestors, from whom he inherited the right to receive tythes; and with respect to Christ, that, if he were on earth, he could not be a priest.*

The phrase, *having neither beginning of days nor end of life;* seems plainly a contrast to the legal period of the Levitical service, which was to begin in the house of Kohath (and all the priests were of the line of Kohath, compare Exod. vi. 18, with Numb. xxvi. 58—60) when they were thirty years old, and to close when they were fifty years old, Numb. iv. 3, &c. But there was no time specified when the priest-

hood of Melchisedec began, nor when it was to close; that being *made like unto the Son of God*, his priesthood might be commensurate with his day; that he might be a lively figure of him *who is before all things, by whom all things consist*; who was from ancient times the medium of intercourse between the Supreme God and his creatures, the channel of Divine communications. No beginning of Melchisedec's days being specified, was proper that he might represent him who could say, *Before the day was I am he.* Isai. xliii. 13. and *before Abraham was I am.* John viii. 58. No end of life specified in the representative of him, who, *because he continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood*, constituted a priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, but *after the power of an endless life.* Therefore he must continue in that exalted dignity to which he is restored, till the end for which he exercises it shall be accomplished, in the perfect and voluntary subjection of every heart—every will unto him; *then will the Son deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be The All in All.*

The apostle invites us to *consider how great this man was to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils, who received these tythes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises, reckoning that without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better.* The greatness of Melchisedec consisted in his being honoured to be a living figure of the Son of God, as *King of Righteousness, King of Peace, and Priest of the Most High God.* Not as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but in the glorious characters which he now sustains. Risen from the dead, and *exalted with the right hand of God, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in the present age but also in that which is to come.* Sitting and ruling, *a priest upon his throne, holding the counsel of peace; the Seed to whom the promises were made; and under whose administration of the Divine purposes the promises are carrying forward to their fulfilment.* Not like the priests of the family of Aaron, who succeeded to the office according to the law of a carnal

commandment ; but constituted after the power of an endless life, by the word of the oath which testified, *Thou art a priest to the age after the similitude or order of Melchisedec.* Being thus constituted he became the surety of a better covenant, of which he is the one Mediator, and always continuing ; his priesthood passeth not from him by succession ; wherefore he is able to save or restore perfectly all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Such a High Priest was necessary for us ; one who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Not needing daily to offer sin-offerings like the priests who had infirmity ; but having offered one sacrifice for sins through his whole life ; sat down at the right hand of God. (So Dr. McKnight translates Heb. x. 12.)

Abraham, by receiving the blessing and giving tythes, seems to have considered Melchisedec in this very light ; and doubtless saw afar off the day of Jesus Christ, the Promised Seed, exhibited in this distinguished type of the Son

of God, who was so admirably adapted to foreflew to the patriarch the day of his power, while he should sit on the right hand of God until all the people should willingly submit themselves unto him and *every one of them be blessed in being turned away from his iniquities*, according to the interpretation which the Holy Spirit has given of the blessedness wherewith all nations were to be blessed in the Promised Seed, Acts iii. 26; and seeing this, the patriarch rejoiced in the prospect, believing that what God had promised, and thus exhibited to him in a figure, he was able also to perform, and therefore his heart was glad. Abraham, though the friend of God, and the father of the faithful, is considered as so much less than Melchisedec as to be blessed by him—*The less is blessed of the better*. In the New Testament we see that Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and all the most dignified and distinguished friends of the Lord, most cordially bend the knee in the name of Jesus, and confess with the mouth that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ;

receiving with humility and gratitude the blessings which the Antitype bestows. This is in fact the very object which the apostle had in view, to shew the glorious superiority which Christ possesses over all created beings, and his boundless capacity to bless them all as their circumstances require, according to the will of God; which had been foreshewed to Abraham in the typical Melchisedec, in which was manifested that *the Possessor of heaven and earth*, has all the fulness of heavenly and earthly blessings, which he graciously condescends to communicate through the appointed Mediator, according to the purposes of his unerring wisdom and goodness.

If we look into the history of Melchisedec, with a view to gratify our curiosity with that kind of knowledge which puffeth up, we will surely be disappointed, for that is a purpose, which it obviously appears, by its brevity, God never designed to be answered by it; but if we contemplate it in that view, in which the wisdom of God so plainly presents this interesting type of the glorious dignity and power of our

exalted Saviour before us, we shall find nothing defective; but that the record is as full and perfect as the nature of the subject required.

The Apostles and first Christians gloried in Christ, in this his exalted character; they contemplated him as raised from the dead to die no more; but established in *the power of an endless life*; and clothed with *the fulness of divine power*; filled with *the fulness of divine love*; possessing *all the resources of infinite wisdom, goodness, and might*; they rejoiced in the perfect and infallibly well-grounded confidence, that *he is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God through him.* They knew that he was exalted for this very purpose, that he might conduct them in the way wherein they should go, and to make them *more than conquerors through his love*; that when weary and exhausted he might refresh them with *the bread of God, with living water, with wine and milk without money or price*; and that he should receive and present with acceptance before the throne of God, their sacrifices of praise and thankfulness;



that he might communicate to them the blessings of heaven from above, and the blessings of the earth beneath ; that by the anointing from the Holy One, he might spiritualize all their earthly blessings ; that by making them deeply sensible that all their blessings proceeded from *the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth*, as preludes to that fulness of joy which is at his right hand, he might lead them to consider themselves as pilgrims on the earth, travelling towards their Father's country, to the mansions prepared for their reception. *They believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing, they had life through his name.*

## LETTER VIII.

*On the Work of Jesus Christ—Atonement—Propitiation—The Harmony of the Divine Perfections.*

**I**N contemplating the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are led by the New Testament, to consider him as the *Spiritual Antitype* of those earthly figures which foreshewed to the ancient believers *the power and coming of the Holy and Just One*; and by the same record we are taught to consider the work which he accomplishes as a *spiritual work*. When therefore we read in Heb. vii. 27, that *he offered up himself*; we are led to understand that this offering up of himself must have been, *not on earth, but in heaven*; for if he were on earth he could not be a

priest, seeing there are priests that offer gifts according to the law ; who serve with the examples and shadows of heavenly things, chap. viii. 4, 5, who would not have suffered him to officiate in the earthly tabernacle, as he sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood ; nor would he have officiated in it, as his ministrations were of a spiritual nature, to be performed in *the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched, and not man.* Hence the Apostle says, *By his own blood he entered once into the holy place,* chap. ix. 12 ; and in verse 14, we learn that *Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God ;* and verse 24, *for Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the True ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

As it was not into the *earthly*, but into the *heavenly* holy place that Jesus entered ; so it was not a *carnal*, but a *spiritual sacrifice*, that he offered. When he entered in *through his own blood*, it is nearly equivalent to the expres-

sion, *he offered himself through the Holy Spirit.* It is the same word (*διὰ*, through) that is used in both passages. The nature of the subject seems to forbid the supposition of our Lord's offering *material blood* in heaven, as the high-priest on the day of atonement offered *material blood* in the earthly holy place. The carnal ordinance of the high-priest offering *the blood of beasts in the earthly holiest*, was an earthly figure of *the spiritual offering of Christ in the true tabernacle.* *This spiritual offering up of himself to God;* which had been prefigured by the entire consuming of the sin-offering by fire; presents to our view our Lord's perfect and entire devoting of himself to do the will of God, not in profession only, but in fact; of which his perfect obedience unto the death, was the most demonstrative evidence. As the high-priest could not enter into the typical holiest, without the blood of the sin-offering; so Christ could not enter into the true holiest till he should enter through his own blood, having perfected his obedience unto the death. Thus it was written of him,

and thus it behoved Christ to submit himself willingly to suffer death in obedience to the will of the Father, and then to enter into his glory. This resignation of his own will to the will of his God and Father, is thus expressed by himself, John vi. 38, *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will ; but the will of him who sent me ;* again in chap. x. 17, 18, *therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my soul that I might take it again ; no one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself ; I have power (or authority) to lay it down, and I have power to take it again ; this commandment have I received of my Father ;—again, I know that his commandment is life everlasting,* chap. xii. 50. *I have kept my Father's commandment and abide in his love,* chap. xv. 10. Corresponding with this, the apostle, referring to what was written concerning him, represents him, Heb. x. as taking away the carnal sacrifices, that he might establish the most perfect and unreserved resignation and spiritual obedience to the will of God, of which the former were the shadows or figures. *When he*

said, *Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin, thou willest not, nor hast pleasure therein; then he said, Lo! I come, to do, O God, thy will; he taketh away the first that he may establish the Second.* This truly spiritual obedience of the heart is that worship which alone can be acceptable to God, who is a Spirit, and must be worshiped *in spirit and in truth*; whereof the ancient typical worship was a figure; and *the spirit and the truth* of that figure was most perfectly exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ, who *delighted to do the will of God, and in whose heart was God's law.*—Such is the pattern of perfection held up to our view in the Sacred Record, to which we must be conformed, according to the Divine predestination; for he *that is perfect shall be as his master; that beholding as in a mirror the glory of our Lord, we may experience the assimilating power of his glorious example, and be changed into the same image; from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

The language of the New Testament, particularly what relates to our Lord's work as the

high-priest, is so intimately connected with, and indeed founded upon, the manner in which the tabernacle service is expressed in the former dispensation, that some attention to the Old Testament service is of great use, in order to enable us the better to understand the meaning of the New Testament on this all-important subject. This is one of the many reasons which ought to draw forth our thankfulness for that Divine Providence which hath transmitted the Old Testament down to our times. The importance of this blessing will more particularly appear by comparing some expressions which occur but seldom in the New Testament, with their more frequent use in the former economy; we may take for instance, the term, *Atonement*, which in the English translation of the New Testament occurs only once; but in the Old Testament is found about sixty times.

The High Priest was to make *an Atonement* for himself and for his household; when individuals or the whole people had sinned ignorantly or knowingly; when they complied with the

Law, bringing their sin-offering and confessing their sin, he was to offer the blood of the sin-offering, and make *an Atonement* for them. He was to make *an Atonement* for the Altar seven days, and to cleanse and anoint it to sanctify it. Exod. xxix. 36, 37. On the tenth day of the seventh month, he was to make *an Atonement* for the Holy Sanctuary, for the Tabernacle of the congregation, for the Altar, for the Priest, and for all the people of the congregation. This was to be an everlasting statute unto them to make *an Atonement* for the children of Israel for all their sins, once a year, Levit. xvi. 33, 34. We read, chap. vi. 30, that the blood is brought into the Tabernacle *to reconcile* with. When Aaron sanctified the Altar to make *Atonements* upon it, he sanctified it to make *reconciliation* upon it, chap. 8. 15. hence the blood with which *reconciliation* is made, is said to *make Atonement for the Soul*; thus also in Ezek. xlv. 20, we read of *reconciling the house*, as Aaron was said to have *reconciled* the Holy place and the Tabernacle of the congregation, Lev. xvi. 20. It appears also



in numerous instances, that Atonement was connected with *cleansing* the sinner from all his sins, and with his receiving *forgiveness* of all his sins. Thus in Levit. xiv. 20, when the Priest makes *Atonement* for the Leper, he shall be *clean*, and in chap. xvi. 30, the *Atonement* was to be made for the people to *cleanse them*, that they might be *clean from all their sins before the Lord*. It would appear, from the general view of the subject, that *Atonement* signifies *Reconciliation*. When Atonement was made for a sinner, he was *reconciled*, he was *cleansed* from his sins, and *his sins were forgiven*. This will farther appear, by considering that the *life*, or rather the *soul* of all flesh is in the *blood thereof*. Levit. xvii. 11, and according to the Law, the shedding and sprinkling the blood of the sin offering, was an emblem, not only of turning away from some particular sin; but of devoting to utter destruction *the life and soul* of sin, for without *shedding of blood* there is no remission, Heb. ix. 22, and every particular *atonement*, in *reconciling the sinner to God, and to his*

*brethren*, was a death-stroke to the life of sin. The offering of half a shekel for a *ransom* for the soul, was *an atonement* for the soul, Exod. xxx. 12, 16, representing in emblem that when they were numbered for the people of the Lord, they must be *devoted to his service*; and must forsake *the love of the world*, of which this ransom was an emblem and token, that there might be *no plague* among them when they were so numbered.—*All souls are the Lord's*. The rich and the poor are of equal estimation in his sight. Our Lord has testified that no one can be his disciple without forsaking all that he hath, Luke xiv. 33. All who would possess the pearl of great price, the hidden treasure—must obtain it at the same price—must forsake all that he hath from the old man—*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*. This is the one way appointed for all who shall be *written among the living*; *the people of God*, upon whom there is *no plague or condemnation*. The Apostle explicitly declares that *if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him*, 1 John ii. 15,

16, he remaineth among those who *shall be written in the earth*, Jer. xvii. 13.

In the New Testament, the term, Atonement occurs in Rom. v. 11. Here there is no room to doubt of its signifying *reconciliation*. This will evidently appear by reading the 10th and 11th verses in the connection wherein the divine spirit has placed them; *for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.* Accordingly the German translation has so rendered the word. The same Greek word is properly rendered *reconciling*, chap. xi. 15, and *reconciliation*, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. In these passages, (and the word is found no where else in the New Testament,) the meaning is so decidedly that of *reconciling man to God*, as to leave no kind of doubt that this is the very idea which the spirit of God intended to express to us by the term. Yet how greatly has the meaning of the term *Atonement*

been mistaken or perverted, by being considered as expressive of *reconciling God to man!* an idea never to be found in the sacred record. The English word *propitiation*, has also been considered in the same sense, as if the design of the expression was that Jesus Christ came to render God the Father propitious or merciful to mankind. This term occurs in Rom. iii. 25. In Heb. ix. 5, the same word is properly translated *Mercy-seat*; precisely the same idea is given in Rom. iii. 25, where our Lord is represented as the proper antitype of the *mercy-seat* under the old covenant. It was *on the mercy-seat*, between the cherubim that the presence of the Lord was manifested in his proper character, *merciful and gracious*. It was *from the Mercy-seat*, after the sprinkling of the blood, that the Lord was pleased to convey to the worshippers, mercy and pardon of sins, through the medium of the High Priest. This was the very reason of its being styled the *Mercy-seat*. Now *God hath set forth Jesus Christ a Mercy-seat*

*through faith in his blood.*—He is at once *the true Mercy-seat* and *the true High Priest*, whereof the former were earthly figures. It is *in him alone*, that the *Divine Mercy* is treasured up for sinners. It is *through him alone* that *the Mercy of God* is conveyed to the true worshippers, *through faith in his blood.* *Neither is there Salvation in any other.* This word occurs only in these two passages in the New Testament, but is of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, where it, or rather the Hebrew term answering to it, is the name of the *lid* or *covering* of the Ark of the Covenant made of pure gold, which was the *Mercy-seat*. Another word, related to this, which is also translated propitiation, is found in 1 John ii. 2, and iv. 10, and which relates to our Lord in the character of High Priest, as *the bearer or bringer of Mercy for our sins*. The Apostle, who well understood the subject, has stated it so explicitly, as not to be easily misunderstood: *Herein is the love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son the Mercy-bearer for our sins.* 1 John iv. 10.

Were it not that what we are accustomed to hear becomes so familiar to us that we frequently let it pass almost without notice, and more frequently without examination, we might well be astonished that the terms *atonement* and *propitiation*, as they stand in the scriptures, should ever have been deemed susceptible of such a construction as to support the notion that *God hated mankind, and was their enemy*; when the whole of Divine revelation, from the beginning to the end; the whole of the gospel without one possible exception, is nothing else, means, and in truth can mean nothing else but the most perfect display of the unalterable goodness and love of God to mankind. Is it not a most unquestionable truth, that *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*? The most perfect interpretation of all the revelations which God had given to mankind; the sum and design of the whole? Let us then *hear him*. He testifies that *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, for God sent not*

*his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved.* He came in obedience to his Father, and testified, saying, *the Son of man is not come to destroy men's souls but to save them,* Luke ix. 56, compare John xii. 47. Thus we are taught to know that *Divine Principle*, which is the spring and principle of all the dealings of God with man—all that he ever did—now does—or ever will do to the human race, invariably flows from that *Divine Principle, infinite, eternal, unchangeable Love.* When he forgives and cleanses the repenting sinner, it is Love ; it is Love that breaks the stubborn heart and teaches it to learn of Jesus to be meek and lowly ; it is Love that heals the broken heart ; it is Love that bows down the stiff-necked to submit unto the righteousness of God ; it is Love that raiseth up the bowed-down ; it is Love that comforts and encourages the humble followers of Jesus Christ ; it is Love that punishes the haughty and rebellious who will not have him to reign over them ; it is Love that, in a future state, will bring the

lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ to sit with him on his throne, to be pillars in the temple of his God ; and it is Love that will cast those who then shall be found to hate him, into that dreadful state of misery which will terminate in the second death ; in a word, it is Love that constraineth the followers of our Lord to live unto him, and it is Love that inflicts misery on those who follow him not, but live unto themselves ; and as it is the same Divine principle which operates in all those things, it is the same Divine end, that, all these means, under the direction of this principle, contribute to accomplish, *for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved. He came not to destroy men's souls, but to save them.*

It has been often said that Divine justice is glorified in the misery and death of the sinner, and that misery and death, even eternal death and eternal misery are necessary to satisfy Divine justice. As to the elect, the sufferings and death of Christ satisfied the justice of God for



them. Alas! we know but little indeed of the character of God, if we suppose that his justice can ever be satisfied by the misery and death of his own offspring—if we suppose it possible that Divine Justice can be satisfied with any thing less than a perfect conformity to the *Law of Love*. *The justice of God* is manifested in all its requirements, in his Law which is spiritual, holy, just, and good; and which admits of no alternative—no equivalent; this Law is summed up and thus expressed by the Son of God himself, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. Divine Justice never was, and never will be satisfied with any thing less nor with any thing else than this. It is not possible that the justice of God can be fully satisfied till every intelligent being, by the all-powerful influence of the Spirit of Love, shall be so conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the righteousness of the Law of Love shall be fulfilled in them, walking not

after the flesh but after the Spirit. No substitute, no alternative can be of any avail. Every part of the conduct of God towards man, whether manifestations of goodness or of severity, whether in the present, or in any future state of existence, until this perfection of Love is accomplished, which casteth out fear; in the nature of the thing, can only be means, preparative steps in the process which God is carrying on by Jesus Christ for the attainment of this end; which is the only result that can be *well-pleasing and acceptable to God.*

The uniform testimony of Scripture represents God, as he truly is, infinitely perfect. Not only that each of his attributes is perfect; but also that in every work of God there is an infinitely perfect harmony of all the Divine perfections. In every exercise of his goodness, his faithfulness and his justice are equally exercised and glorified at the same time, in the same work, towards the same object. The Divine Spirit has expressed this sentiment better than any man can do. *If we confess our sins,*

*he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John i. 9.

In every exercise of his severity, his goodness and love are equally exercised in the same work, at the same time, towards the same object.—  
*He chasteneth for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.* Heb. xii. 10. Therefore, when he sheweth mercy, it as certainly flows from his *justice* as from his *goodness*; and when he inflicteth punishment, it is equally the exercise of his *love* and of his *justice*.

But it has been said, “these things relate to the dealings of God with men in this present life.” True; and if ever God should cease to be the same absolutely perfect Being; if ever it should cease to be true that *with Him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning*; then he may act upon principles diametrically opposite to these; but till such change take place, it must remain absolutely impossible for any one of the Divine Perfections to be truly honoured by the degradation of another, therefore his goodness can never be glorified, without his

justice to the same individual being at the same time in full operation, and his justice can never be glorified, without his love to the same individual being in full operation and exercise at the same time.

## LETTER IX.

*God is Love.—Mistaken views of the character of God, and the work of Christ.*

**G**OD is Love, saith the apostle, by the Divine Spirit, which *searcheth all things, even the deep things of God*; and it is the unfathomable depth of the *love of God which passeth knowledge* that is opened to us and in us by the Holy Spirit, that we might be filled with all his fulness. Ephes. iii. 16—19. This was the sum of the testimony of the holy men of God who spake in various measures, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and which the Son of God came to give us a more ample discovery of; for *no one knoweth the Father save the Son,*

*and he to whom the Son shall reveal him. Every one in whom the Son reveals the Father, is taught to know and believe the love that God hath to him, so as to live in that love; and to know that God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God and God in him. 1 John iv. 16. God so loved the world, saith the faithful witness, that he gave his only-begotten Son. If we inquire for a moment what was the state of mankind when God so loved them, we shall find from the testimony of Divine Truth that they were walking in the vanity of their minds; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. Manifesting the enmity of their minds in wicked works. In this very state God loved them, and so loved them, that he sent his Son to be he Saviour of the world.*

The love of God to mankind never was, nor was possible to be, interrupted, because *his love is unchangeable in its own nature*. Notwithstanding their wickedness, he remained their *unalterable friend*. This is the true reason why the Scriptures never speak of *reconciling God to mankind*. *Reconciliation*, from the very nature of the thing, can only be possible when love and friendship have been destroyed or interrupted; but the love of God, and his kindness towards mankind, remaining unchangeable; nothing was needed *to reconcile him, or dispose him to be gracious to them*, for he was already unalterably so. Although their transgressions do render them insensible of his goodness, they cannot destroy his love, because he remaineth faithful; and when they are brought to know the Lord, then they understand that his loving kindness, like himself, cannot be changed. This is the true reason of the Apostle's testimony, that *no created thing can be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. We may turn away from the love of

God, and become alienated from him; but nothing ever did, nor ever can quench his love; and that love of God will overcome all opposition, and finally restore all his fallen offspring to the understanding and eternal enjoyment of their Father's love.

It was *the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man*, which appeared in the sending of the only-begotten Son of God to be the Saviour of the world; not a kindness and love which only then began; still less was it kindness and love to which God was disposed by the death of Christ; but it then *appeared*, as God's ancient character, *merciful and gracious*. It was the manifestation of the *grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*. The Apostle asks, *If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Every thing that is good and perfect comes to us as a gift from *the Father of Lights*. They are *the gifts of his grace*; emanations from the overflowing and inexhausti-



ble fountain of Divine Goodness, which embraces in its operations all the works of his hands. The Scripture character of God is peculiarly emphatic. HE IS GOOD AND DOETH GOOD. His very nature is *goodness itself*. Hence our Lord says *there is none good but One God*. He is the original self-subsistent fountain of goodness, whence all goodness in any other being is derived; or rather, wherever there is goodness, it is God himself dwelling there: therefore it is said of Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God. *He went about doing good*; and herein he exhibited a visible manifestation of the Divine character, shewing that *the Father dwelt in him and he in the Father*. But as there is not, and cannot possibly be, any real goodness without *justice* and *faithfulness*; therefore the exercise of justice and faithfulness is in fact the exercise of *Divine goodness*, and cannot possibly be otherwise. Hence the Apostle, who was taught by the Holy Spirit to know this; expresses this very Idea, when he declares the manifestation of the Divine character in the forgiveness of sin.

It was not necessary for him to use the term, *Goodness*, but he perfectly expressed the same thing, when he said, *if we confess our sins, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* It is the unspeakable excellence and perfection of the character of God, as unfolded in his designs and dealings respecting mankind, that is the true ground or foundation of the Law of Love; the peculiar privilege of those who *know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.* No command could make them *love the Lord their God*, without apprehending the Divine amiableness and perfection of his character. It is the perception of this, and the knowledge and belief that *he has loved them*, which fills their hearts with lowliness and love. Hence it is the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, opening in their hearts *the deep things of God*, which fulfils in them the righteousness of the Law of Love, delivers them from the law of sin and death, and sets them free from condemnation; for there is no law against them.

With such glorious views as the Sacred Records give us of the character and conduct of God, does it not appear astonishing, that the phrase, *the doctrine of Atonement*, should have become a technical phrase, to express the strange unscriptural notion, that *God the Father hated mankind and was their enemy*; and that *Jesus Christ, by his blood, quenched the fiery wrath of an angry God, and renonciled him to man*? or rather, that he satiated the vengeance of an otherwise implacable God, by standing in the room of certain sinners, having their guilt imputed to him, and bearing and exhausting the whole weight of infinite wrath in their stead; so that having paid the whole of their infinite debt; having rendered a perfect satisfaction to what is called infinite justice, for their sins, they are set free; God the Father having no claim on them, his justice being completely satisfied. As Jesus Christ is said to have suffered in their stead, by having their guilt imputed to him; so they are considered as being justified by having his righteousness imputed to them. Therefore Jesus Christ is said to have purchased for them, *the love and*

*favour of God; to have purchased salvation, eternal life, and a heavenly inheritance.*—Some have gone so far as to say that he even purchased *the Holy Ghost* for them; consequently they claim justification and all these privileges as a *matter of right, on the right of Purchase or Merit the Merit of Christ's Blood*, which must have been *more than infinite, to overcome infinite wrath and enmity,*—and to purchase *infinite benefits.* This appears to be the reason why, in so many prayers, all benefits are asked and expected, *for the Merits of Jesus Christ*, and requests are made *that God would be reconciled to us, for, and through the Merits of Jesus Christ.* As however, there would seem to be some degree of presumption in urging *the claim of merit* in the presence of God, a solution of the difficulty is attempted, by contending that *Jesus Christ is God the Son*, equal with God the Father, and though *his human nature* was not equal to the task, yet *his Divine Nature* was capable of *meriting from God the Father.* Does this solution answer the purpose? or does it not introduce a dilemma not less than that which it was intended to obvi-

ate? Does it not represent *Jesus Christ as an independent being, possessed of Something which God the Father neither had, nor had any right to without giving to Jesus Christ an equivalent for it?* This doubtless represents mankind as under the highest obligations to Jesus Christ for his gracious interference on their behalf; but does it not represent God the Father in the character of an austere inexorable Creditor, from whom no forgiveness could be obtained without its being purchased by the blood of his own Son?—But I forbear to enlarge upon the subject.—Many of God's dear children profess to hold somewhat like these views of this subject, which they hear almost daily preached, and which is incorporated with many of their prayers. How many pious souls have been embarrassed in difficulties—have had their comforts marred—and a dark gloom thrown over their prospects by the baleful influence of this perplexing error! while notwithstanding sound piety, and in many of them great learning; having been educated in these habits of thinking, which have been

affiliated with their views of christianity ; they have groaned under the burden, while they have deemed the subject too sacred for investigation.

It is probable that this doctrine, like many other errors, was it first more simple ; and very likely arose from pious zeal to exalt the character and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, in a way different from what is written of him in the Scriptures of Truth ; whereby the very character of our Lord, and the nature of his work, came to be mistaken and in some degree lost sight of ; for zeal, not directed by the Divine Testimony, darkens the minds of the zealous, and leads into perplexity, which through the remedies attempted by human wisdom, becomes more perplexed ; till men, mistaking the real character of the only true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ; and changed the glory of the Incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible*

man; comparing *the All-perfect God* to corruptible and corrupted kings and rulers, in the treatment of their rebellious subjects; to some of whom pardon has been offered on certain conditions, to be performed by them, or by some surety for them; but whose policy too often has been to devote to permanent imprisonment, perpetual banishment, or to utter destruction, those whom they were not willing to pardon, or those whom they have not been able to bring to their terms. A principal source of mistake has consisted in supposing that the *All-mighty, and All-perfect God*, must act as these men do, who are often weak and wicked; instead of considering that God himself is the standard to which these rulers ought to be conformed; and in consequence of men, however serious they may be, setting up this false and foolish idol, and bowing down to it, they are involved in that perplexity and gloominess which mars their own comfort, so that it may in some measure be said of them as the Apostle

said of evil-workers, to whom the supporters of evil doctrines bear considerable relation,—*they receive in themselves that recompense of their error which is meet.*—Having in part forsaken the Light, they stumble in no small degree of darkness; not reflecting that all the proper attributes of God are Immutable and Eternal. His Power, His Wisdom, His Justice, His Goodness, &c. are absolutely incapable of change. Therefore if ever hatred and enmity to mankind had been proper attributes of God, (which is absolutely impossible,) they must have been eternally so, and incapable of change; as we certainly know that hatred of and enmity to wickedness, rank among the proper attributes of God, and we also know that it is and must be unchangeably so; and that he cannot look upon sin but with unalterable detestation. It was for this very purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might save us from our sins by purging them away from us, thus destroying the works of the devil. The design of the coming



of Jesus Christ was not to make any change in God ; (which must necessarily have been an impossible attempt,) but to make a change in man by reconciling him to God ; and this was the design of God in sending his beloved Son to be the Saviour of the world ; hence the Apostle states the ministry of reconciliation in these words—*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses.* We accordingly, find when the Apostles preached to the Gentiles, they called them to *repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance* ; but in all their preaching, they never mentioned a word about *reconciling God to men* ; such an idea they never held out, because it was not among the things which the Divine Spirit taught them ; but as ambassadors for God, *they prayed men to be reconciled to God* ; and in order to lead them to this reconciliation, they preached that *God was in Christ*, manifesting the unsearchable riches of his Eternal and unchangeable goodness and love for the very

purpose of *reconciling mankind to himself*; that as he had formerly declared by the prophet, *when the wicked should forsake his wickedness and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, he would be merciful, for our God will abundantly pardon.*

## LETTER X.

*Manifestations of the Messiah.*

OUR Lord assumes to himself the title of *the beginning of the creation of God*. He says of himself, *Before Abraham was, I am*. His Apostles testify that *he is before all things, and by him all things consist*. These things seem to invite our attention to the process which he has been carrying on from ancient times, and will still carry on, under various dispensations, until all things shall be voluntarily subjected to him, who is the head of every man. Indeed we should seem to have very imperfect views of the character and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, without contemplating the characters and works

by which he was manifested before the period of his coming in the flesh, as well as afterwards.

When God by the prophet testified of the *goings forth of the Messiah*, he not only declared that *he should come forth to be ruler in Israel*; but also that *his goings forth had been from of old from the days of hidden duration*. Micah. v. 2.

In considering what the Scriptures testify concerning the ancient *goings forth*, of our Lord, we meet with the declarations of the Holy Spirit by the Apostles, that *God created all things by Jesus Christ*. Ephes. iii. 9, and that *all things were created by him and for him*; and *he is before all things, and by him all things consist*. Col. i. 16, 17. *As all things were created by him*, they stood related to him as *his creatures*, and he to them as *their Creator*. As they were created *for him*, it would seem to indicate that they were designed for *his inheritance—his possession,—his flock*; and he sustained towards them the relations of *their Lord,—their Shepherd*; whose

*own the Sheep were.* All things were created *in Him*, (so the word signifies.) They were *in Him*, in *the knowledge of The Only True God and his Christ*. Therefore their recovery is effected by their being *renewed in this knowledge*. While they abode *in him*, who is *the Truth*, they bore his image; holy, pure, spiritual, enjoying *the fulness of God*, which was treasured up in him. Their *spiritual life* was *in him*, and could not be utterly lost; (though they might deprive themselves of the enjoyment of it, becoming dead in trespasses and sins.) He was *their head*, and went forth as *their king before them, the Lord on the head of them*, as they will find again, to their unspeakable joy, when they shall be restored. It is true this expression, Micah ii. 13. relates to gathering the remnant of Israel, as *the sheep of Bosrah*, in deep affliction, (as the name Bosrah signifies) before they became again *as the flock in the midst of their fold*, after they had risen up as an enemy *seeking a polluted rest*. It may be observed that according to the interpretation of this figure by

the Divine Spirit, 1 Pet. ii. 25. it refers to *the spiritual returning* of those who are *wearied and heavy laden, to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls*. As the idea of men's *returning*, is that of their *going back where they were before*, it plainly indicates the *original spiritual state* in which they were before they went astray. They abode in him; he was their King, their Lord, their head; and though they turned away from him, and deprived themselves of the sensible enjoyment of his love; they could not dissolve the relations in which he stood to them. The Apostle does not only say that Christ *will be* the head of every man, but the head of every man *is Christ*; denoting the uninterrupted continuance of that relation on his part, which could not be destroyed; but they behoved to be renewed in their relation to him; for which purpose he was manifested in the fulness of time, to seek and save those who were lost.

One of the earliest goings forth of our Lord in the character of *Mediator, the depository of*

*Divine Goodness for us*, is mentioned by the Apostle, 2 Tim. i. 9. and Tit. i. 2. where he declares that *grace was given to us in Christ Jesus*, and *eternal life promised, by God, who cannot lie, before the world began, or rather before the times of the ages.* And in Ephes. i. 4. 5. 6. we read of some who were *chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and blameless before him in Love*, that God had *predestinated them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*, to be instruments for carrying into effective operation, the gracious designs of our Heavenly Father, *to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he made them accepted in the beloved.*

These passages unite with other Scriptures in shewing that our blessed Lord was *the head of all principality and power*, before the foundation of the world; *all things being subject to him.* He emptied himself of this glorious dignity, in obedience to the will of his God and Father; and according to his prayer to the Father, is

*re-instated in his former glory, exalted far above all principality and power ; though now we see not yet all things restored to their subjection under him, the work is begun, and will progress until it shall be perfected, according to the will of God. In his relations to mankind, (who are the subjects of our more immediate consideration) he was then as he now is, the head of every man. It would appear, that before the world was, he was the depository of the Divine Goodness for mankind.—Grace was given to us in Christ Jesus. He was the Divinely appointed channel through whom the emanations of Divine Goodness should be communicated to them. He was the Divinely appointed Head, in and under whom all the wanderers, or lost sheep, should be re-united to God, in the dispensation of the fulness of the times ; therefore eternal life could be promised, only in Christ Jesus. The record testifies that, God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. What the Apostle calls the unsearchable riches of Christ is all the fulness of the Godhead, which it pleased the Father*



should dwell bodily or collectively in him, for the express purpose of *reconciling all things to himself by Jesus Christ, having made peace through the blood of his cross*, compare Rom. v. 1. 10. and Ephes. ii. 14.—17.

As the plan of Infinite Wisdom and Love was laid before the foundation of the world, the Apostle represents *all the works of God as known unto him from the age*. These things must have been included in *the glory* which Our Lord declares *he had with the Father before the world was*. The possession of all power and authority over all the works of God, must have been vested in him before the foundation of the world; because the riches of the Divine Fullness constituted that *form of God* in which he was, before he emptied himself, and took upon him *the form of a servant*, and with which he is again glorified according to his prayer, John xvii. 5.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is represented to us by the Divine Spirit in the New Testament, as *He, in and by whom God created all things*; Ephes.

iii. 9. Coloff. i. 16. Heb. i. 10. 11. 12. Hence the New Testament leads us to conclude that when *the Lord God created all things, formed man, and spake to him*, he effected these things by Jesus Christ, *who is the image of the Invisible God, by whom all things consist*; for the Apostle testifies concerning the Father, that *no man hath seen nor can see him*. 1 Tim. vi. 16. In this view we may easily perceive the propriety of applying to our Lord, what Solomon hath said of *wisdom*, in the eighth chapter of his Proverbs. This indeed has been said to be personifying the Attribute of Wisdom, and has been adduced as an instance of the boldness of the eastern figurative style. The whole chapter, however, may lead *the Christian* to a much more simple and sublime application of it; even to him, who because of the Divine Wisdom treasured up in, and manifested by him, is emphatically said to be *of God, made unto us Wisdom!* Indeed, whoever will read from the twenty-second verse to the end of the chapter, may very readily observe that the idea of sim-

ply personifying an attribute, which in this case appears to be overstraining even oriental figure, ought to give place to the application to *Him*, who is *the image of the Invisible God*; who manifesteth to us the Divine perfections, harmonious in all their operations; *whose delights were with the sons of men, and in whom grace was given to us before the world began.*

The doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ having been the agent or servant by whom God created all things, has been warmly opposed, though on very different grounds, by those who hold the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, and by those who hold the Socinian scheme. Among other passages of Scripture, the following from the prophet Isaiah have been urged by both, though by neither with the view of setting one part of the Scriptures against another, Isa. xlv. 24. *I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth out the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself, and chap. xlv. 12. I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens,*

*and all their host have I commanded.* These and other passages of the like import, are produced by the believers of the trinitarian hypothesis, to repel the idea of our Lord Jesus Christ being any way inferior to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the work of creation; they believe that he was engaged in the work of creation; but contend that it was as the second person of the Trinity; God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father.—Enough has already been stated to shew that this hypothesis is totally destitute of evidence from the Scriptures; and it will not be contended that the evidence of its truth arises from the nature of the thing, for the doctrine is confessedly incomprehensible.

The Socinian reasoning arises from a very different ground, and has a very different object in view. It is contended that our Lord had no existence till the days of Herod the king of Judea; and therefore that the true God performed his creating work alone, without any agent or instrument; appealing to these decla-

rations of the Lord by the Prophet for the truth of that opinion. The Prophet has indeed given these declarations with equal truth and sublimity; did the Apostle impeach the Prophet's veracity, when he testified that *God created all things by Jesus Christ*, by whom the power of God was exerted? Most assuredly he did not. How often do we read that the Lord brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and led him through the wilderness? Moses saith, Deut. xxxii. 12. *The Lord alone did lead him.* The Psalmist says, Psal. lxxvii. 20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* Does any Christian consider the last clause of this verse to be inconsistent with the former part of it, or with the testimony of Moses, that *the Lord alone did lead him*? Surely no. Why? For this obvious reason, that all the power and authority which Moses could possibly possess, in conducting the people, was the power and authority of God, who saw meet to exert this power by Moses as his servant or instrument. Such also was the case with our

Lord Jesus Christ; his own testimony is very explicit; *the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.* He also testified, *the Son can do nothing of himself.* Such was his testimony when he was on earth in the days of his flesh; and from his prayer to the Father, John xvii. 5. 22. it obviously appears that the Glory which he had with the Father before the world was, like that which he gave to his disciples, was the gift of his God and Father. Hence it appears that as he was *in the form of God*, or possessed this glorious dignity and power by the will and the gift of God before he came in the flesh, all the works of God were carried on by him. This appears still more evident from the expression, Gen. i. 26. *Let us make man*; here the term *us* appears to correspond with the same term, John xvii. 21. where the expression *us* clearly refers to the Father and the Son; the whole scope, and indeed the very nature of the prayer, though expressing *union*, necessarily precludes the idea of *equality*, as

certainly as that the expression, *that they also may be one in us*, gives no indication of the Disciples of Jesus being *equal to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

As it was *by him* that the *power, wisdom and goodness of God* were *exhibited* in the benevolent and beautiful form and furniture of the heavens and the earth, so it was *by him*, in a special manner, in the creation and the treatment of *Man*, that the Divine Goodness was particularly manifested. After man had fallen by transgression, the early intimations of recovery through the *Chosen Seed*, and the manner of that recovery, indicated in the appointment of sacrifice, emblematically representing the putting away of sin, and the mortification of fleshly lusts, the sources of sin, were among *the ancient goings forth of the Messiah*, characteristic of his *ruling in the True Israel*; the *wrestlers against spiritual wickedness*. From the days of Adam till the time of Noah, he continued to manifest the Divine Goodness and Forbearance; and in the instance of Enoch, shewed

what was the consequence of *walking with God*. When all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth, he took them away by the waters of a flood, reserving Noah and his family, saving them by water, that they might replenish the earth with a new seed; so that the water which was the means of life unto the righteous, was the means of death to the ungodly; how striking an emblem of future things, compare 2 Cor. ii. 14, 15, 16. While he shewed the long-suffering patience of our heavenly Father, waiting in his graciousness for a hundred and twenty years, he likewise *made his power known, as an avenger to execute judgment* on those who continued obstinate in wickedness.

Having called Abraham, he opened to him anew the promise of universal blessing *in the Chosen Seed*, by which all the families of the earth were to be blessed, *in turning away every one of them from his iniquities*; the progress of the promise, like the path of him who is *the Just One*, increased in lustre like the morning light; while he exhibited the inflic-



tion of awful punishment on the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and the neighbouring cities, as an outward example of the fearful judgments which should afterwards overtake those who would live ungodly. Shewing not only that the throne of iniquity could have no fellowship with him; but that obstinate wickedness, unrepented of, would necessarily bring the often warned, though still obdurate offender, under the operation of that death which is the wages of sin. In these ancient *goings forth* or manifestations of the Messiah, he exhibited the same invariable immaculate holiness and purity of character, and presented to view the one only possible way in which sinners could be restored to God; that is by the complete destruction of sin and sinful lusts, and entire resignation of heart to the will of God. In all ages and dispensations, *the only possible way to the Father is the Son.* There is no other way of finding the Son the way to the Father, but by the Divine Spirit, whereby Christ comes to be in men and they

in him. The ancient faithful, by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, perceived him, and were in him, and thereby walked with God. — *The way which leadeth to life* always was, and ever will be equally *narrow*, and *the gate* at all times equally *strait*; so that the *few* only who were heartily willing to leave every thing which was esteemed *their own*, have *found and entered*, and the *many* who sought to enter in, without thus rejecting all *their own things* have not been able. The same things, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, whether considered as sin, or righteousness, lawful or unlawful, have always occasioned the disability. The trying of oxen, and the viewing of purchased land; even domestic attachments; the loving of parents, wife, or children, however lawful and right in themselves; yet when indulged so far as to engage our hearts more than the love of God, will as certainly disable us from entering in at the *strait gate which leadeth to life*, as revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, or any other of the

works of the flesh. They all arise from the same source, and excessive attachment to things in themselves lawful, are the more subtil and dangerous to those who *seek to enter in*, in that they are more plausible, and less apt to arouse the conscience; yet are the very *thorns which choke the word and render us unfruitful*.

In contemplating the ancient manifestations of the Messiah, we are naturally led to think of his appearance to Abraham, as recorded in the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, where we read that *the Lord* (Jehovah, in the Hebrew,) *appeared to him in the plains of Mamre*. This was not the Invisible God, whom the Apostle says, *no man hath seen nor can see*; and therefore our views are led to *him who is the image of the Invisible God*. The birth of Isaac and the blessing of all the families of the earth were predicted, and the operation of the equitable principles of the Divine conduct disclosed, shewing that *the Judge of all the earth will do right*. It has been said indeed, that these things passed *in a vision*, by which is meant that they

were not real occurrences, but something like a dream. This, however, is mere conjecture, and to those who will read the chapter without prejudice, it will appear an *improbable conjecture*, and therefore may be left without farther inquiry. In the 24th chapter of Exodus also, we read that *Moses and Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, saw the God of Israel; they saw God, and did eat and drink.* For the same reason of the Supreme God being *invisible*, we are led to consider this as referring to *him who is the image of the Invisible God.* In the former instance, (Gen. xviii.) the promises were given, not to be accomplished in the way that human wisdom and prudence might dictate, but according to the wisdom of *him who hath chosen the weak things to confound these that are mighty*, and connected the fulfilment of his promises with *keeping the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice*, which was not fulfilled in the seed of Abraham after the flesh, but in those who walk in the steps of Abraham's faith. The latter instance was connected with

the giving of the Law as *shadows of good things to come*, to be a schoolmaster until Christ, when the shadows were to give place, and the heirs, no longer under a schoolmaster or tutor, should receive the Spirit and privileges of children, that, *no longer under the veil, which is done away in Christ, they might all with unvailed face, behold the glory of the Lord, and by its assimilating power, be changed into the same image.* In the character of *the Angel of God's presence*, he led them into the wilderness, and gave them the Law, comp. Exod: xxxii. 34, and xxxiii, 14, with Isai. lxiii. 9. as a shadow of his conduct in the spiritual kingdom, comp. Hof. ii. 14, 15. with Phil. iii. 7, 11.

Having brought the people with Joshua into the possession of the Gentiles, when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, his going forth was now in the character of *the ruler in Israel*. When they were obedient, he shed forth blessings upon them, which should be figures of spiritual things. When they rebelled and forsook him, he gave them into the hands of their

enemies, who afflicted them ; when humbled by their sufferings, and brought to confess their sins, he raised them up judges who wrought deliverance for them ; even when they had rejected him, and demanded a king like the nations ; he did not cast them off to abhor them utterly ; but after having given them a king in his anger, and taken him away in his wrath, he raised up David, and testified that of his seed according to the flesh, *the deliverer* should come ; even as we know it came to pass, when the prediction addressed to Bethlehem, Micah v. 2. was accomplished ; *out of thee shall he come forth unto me to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of hidden duration.*

LETTER XI.

*Christ the restorer of Life.*

**O**UR Lord hath testified with his accustomed solemnity, John v. 24, 27, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. To*

this the beloved disciple hath set his seal, 1 John v. 10, 11, 12. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not, God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not on the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* To the same purport the Baptist had given his testimony, John iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son of God shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* Corresponding with these testimonies Paul declares that *the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, was made a quickening Spirit,* 1 Cor. xv. 45. According to the declaration of our Lord himself, John x. 10. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* It appears to be the uniform sentiment, always either expressed or implied in the Scriptures, that man, as he comes into this world, is in a state of *Spiritual Death. Dead in Sins; Alienated from the Life of God;*



which was that *Spiritual Life* in which each individual was originally created, and to which he has *died*, or lost that life through sin; for *the reward of sin is death*. In this state mankind bear the image of the first Adam; who, when formed of the earth was made *a living soul* and was *only soulish*, having no knowledge of the things of the Spirit of God, which can only be *Spiritually discerned*. The first man was *of the earth, earthy*; and those who bear his image are like him, *earthy*. So the Apostle states it, 1 Cor. chap. 15, and as he shews, chap. ii. 14. *The soulish man* (so the term  $\Psi\upsilon\chi\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$  signifies\*) *receiveth not the things of the*

\* The distinction between *Soulish*, and *Spiritual*, besides, the former being the literal meaning of the term used by the Apostle, is better than that between *Natural* and *Spiritual*; for surely the *Spiritual man* is not *less Natural* than the man who is *not Spiritual*. If it be true, and there appears no room for any doubt about it, that man was originally created *Spiritual*; when he comes to be renewed in *Spiritual life*, he is restored to his *Natural state*, while he who is not so renewed, remains in an *unnatural state* of rebellion

*Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are Spiritually discerned.* This was the case with Adam, who was made a *Soulish* man ; and, not possessing Spiritual life, he could not possibly lose it. The ideas of *Soulish* and *Earthly* appear to denote that those who are in that state can extend their views no farther than to earthly things and their qualities, which are perceived through the medium of the outward senses, and to analogical reasonings from earthly things to others of the same kind. This was exactly the case with Adam, as we know it is with his posterity who bear his image. Hence we may perceive the impropriety of that conjecture, that when Adam transgressed the law of his God, he suffered a *Spiritual death*. A

against his Creator, and only benefactor. Men are indeed said to be *by nature, Children of wrath*. It is most assuredly true ; because wrath is the *Natural* consequence of transgression ; but that state of *Wickedness* which incurs wrath, in which mankind are, till born again, is not the *Natural state* in which God created them.

conjecture as groundless as it would be to suppose, that as often as any one of his unrenewed posterity, bearing his image, commits sin, he *dies Spiritually*, or loses a life, which, from his coming into the world, he never possessed. The truth of the matter is much more accurately expressed in the language of the Apostle. *He that loveth not his brother ABIDETH IN DEATH*, 1 John iii. 14. The notion of Adam *dying Spiritually*, however, has been associated with that of his *transmitting moral turpitude*, to his posterity, together with the *imputation of his personal guilt* to them; all equally destitute of truth; and incorporated into a System, not of the wisdom of God, but of the wisdom of man; a melancholy proof, if any proof were wanting, that the Soulish mind *abideth in death*.

To mankind in this state of *Spiritual Death*, our Lord Jesus Christ was sent; *Anointed with the Divine Spirit without measure; to Speak the words of God; that the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God, and that they who would listen should live.* That having heard and learn-

ed of the Father, who has testified, *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him*; they should come unto the Son *that they might have life*; assured that they shall not be rejected. *My sheep*, says the Lord, *hear my voice, and follow me,—and I give unto them eternal life.* Those who *will not come to him that they might have life, abide still in death*: they have not the Son of God, and therefore have not life, and while in that state, *the wrath of God abideth on them.*

As the work of our Lord is to revive or quicken those who are *dead in sins*, Ephes. ii. 1, 5. So the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 45, that, as a direct contrast to *the first Adam*, *the last Adam* was made a *quickening Spirit*, or Spiritual quickener. *As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.* Such is our Lord's testimony, John v. 21. *For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*, verse 26. This life was given to the Son for the express purpose of being communicated to those whom

the Father had given to him to quicken, John xvii. 2. It is not the object of the present enquiry to prove the Universality of this quickening. This has been sufficiently done elsewhere.\* At present it is sufficient to remark, that the very expressions themselves, which are used, necessarily convey the idea of discrimination; and shew, without any twisting, that it is only they, who, hearing the voice of the Son of God, are willing to listen to him, and follow him, who will receive from him eternal life. Those only who, in the present life, believe and obey the Son of God, have life, while those who, hearing, do not attend to him, to obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, and will not come to him that they may have life, *abide in Death*; and treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will, by Jesus Christ, render unto every man accord-

\* See Letters on the Existence and Character of the Deity, and on the moral State of Man. Vol. II. lett. 15, 16, 17.

ing to his deeds. They who in this life believe and obey him, *shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from Death unto Life.* It may be observed that the epithet connected with life, which in English we read, *Eternal*, is never used by the inspired writers to convey the idea of *strict eternity*, or *endless duration*; but is always applied to duration which is limited, though the limitation is not defined; as in English we say *a long time*, which has respect to limited duration, though the expression, *a long time*, does not define the limits of this duration. From the testimony of Divine Revelation, the only source of information on this subject, it plainly appears that they who in this world, attend to the voice of Christ, and follow him, have the earnest of that Spiritual Life, the fulness of which they shall enjoy, when *mortality shall be swallowed up of life.* That they will enjoy this Life, while the Lord Jesus Christ is carrying on the process of reconciling all things unto God; and that in all probability they will always continue to possess degrees

of Blessedness, and Dignity, which those who die in their sins, even though they will ultimately be quickened, and reconciled to God, will never be able to attain.

The things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the Soulish man, neither can he know them in his unrenewed state. His perceptions extend not beyond earthly things with which he is conversant. He is no more competent to judge of spiritual things than a man born blind is to judge of colours; accordingly the Apostle, Ephes. iv. 18, represents mankind in this condition, as *having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.* Our Blessed Lord came to awake the dead, and to give them the light of Life, wherefore he saith, *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. I am come a light unto the world,* said the Lord, *that whosoever followeth me should not abide in darkness, but have the light of life.* He came to give deliverance to the captives, to set the

oppressed free. *Every one who committeth sin is the slave of sin*; taken captive by Satan at his pleasure. He came to bless mankind, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities, and declared, *if the Son make you free ye shall be free indeed.* Mankind, Jews and Gentiles, were enemies in their hearts to God and to one another. He came that he might unite those who were at variance with one another, and *to reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.* The carnal mind is not subject to the Law of God, neither can it be, therefore those who are carnally minded cannot please God. Jesus came to subdue the rebellious hearts of mankind, and bring them to a willing subjection to the Divine Law; opening their understanding to perceive the Divine excellence of the Law of God, that they might delight in it. They were corrupted, and walked in wickedness; he came to sanctify them that they might walk with him in newness of Life.

The condition of a person in a state of Spiritual death may be compared to that of a man



born blind. The blind man may possess all the other powers of man, his senses may have their proper exercise; but he is totally incapable of perceiving the objects of sight, or of having any adequate ideas of them. The beauties of light and colours; all the variegated elegancies of the most delightful landscape, are entirely beyond the reach of his perceptions, or even of his imagination. He may hear them described; he may even be taught to describe them himself, in words; but these descriptions, however well they may be understood by those who have the powers of vision, can excite no ideas in his own mind, that approach nearer to the resemblance of the objects described, than those of fine smells or pleasant sounds; because all his ideas are necessarily associated with the objects of those faculties which he possesses, and can have no possible relation to those of powers which he does not possess, and of which he is necessarily ignorant. The man spiritually dead is equally incapable of understanding the things of the Spirit of God. He may hear of them,

they may be in a measure described to him, nay, he must hear of them, for *the dead SHALL hear the voice of the Son of God*; they shall be so far awakened, that, if they will hear, more shall be given them. He may abound in the *wisdom of words*; and the combinations of these *words* may be such as to describe accurate notions. He may be in love with these notions, may contend zealously, even to blood, against whoever may oppose them, and under the influence of these systematic views, may, like Herod, do many things; and yet, however much instruction these words may give to *those who have ears to hear*; the ideas in his own mind will be altogether earthly; and as totally different from the things of the Spirit of God, as a *green colour* is from *the sound of a trumpet*; nay, indeed infinitely more different; for the colour and the sound may both be perceived by external senses, and the man may be still carnal; but *the things of God knoweth no one but the Spirit of God*.

As man by seeking to do *his own will*, turned away from *the will of God*; he became *alienated from the Life of God*; and as his heart was no longer united with God, who was the source of his Life; he became *vain in his imagination*; his *foolish heart was darkened*. He became *dead* to the things of God; incapable of discerning Spiritual things. This *death* was the natural consequence of sin; and could only be removed by *the Life of God* being again manifested in his heart. This *Divine Life*, or *Life of God* was originally *the gift of God in Jesus Christ*, unto his rational creatures; and as they lost this *Life* by rejecting *Him*, who is *the way, the truth and the life*; it can only be renewed as *the gift of God in Jesus Christ*. It can only be received by returning to, or receiving *him* who is *the way, the truth and the life*. This is *the record*, says John, *that God hath given to us Eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son*, hence, *he that hath the Son hath Life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not Life*. The *dead* are made to *hear the voice of the Son of God*. It is the same

all-powerful voice which said *let light be, and light was*. Accordingly the Apostle recognises it as the same Divine Power, and very particularly marks the sphere of its operation, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined IN OUR HEARTS, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*

The different manner of that powerful voice's working, as described by Moses, and testified by Jesus Christ, corresponds with the different subjects of its energies; but the effect in recalling the Spiritually Dead to Spiritual Life is as much superior to the former as Heaven is above Earth. It will bring the subjects of its power to that state which is the proper Antitype of what was described by Moses, as VERY GOOD, in the view of God. The operation of that voice in the former case was upon what had neither will nor power to *disobey*; but in the latter case, the blessed effect is so inseparably connected with *voluntary obedience*, that it never can take place without it.

Those only who hear the word of Christ, and believe on Him who sent Christ, have *Life*, for Faith cometh by hearing, and worketh by Love. But those who having their eyes so far opened as to see the Son, and the Father manifested in him, have hated both, and will not come to the Son that they might have Life, *abide in death*, without a cloak for their sins. *This is the condemnation*, says the Lord, *that light is come into the world, and men LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, because their deeds were evil.* Is then the effect of this voice of the Son of God lost on such? No. Some indeed appear at once to submit, and to say *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* But there are others who are treated with line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, in order that *they who erred in Spirit should come to understanding, and they that murmured should learn doctrine.* In such the Divine Testimony is unto God a Sweet Savour of Christ in them that are saved; whilst those who continue obstinately to love darkness rather than the light, go and

fall backward, and are broken, and snared, and taken. In them the same Divine testimony is also unto God a Sweet Saviour of Christ in them that perish, because that very perishing will ultimately be found to be a part of the process by which these marred vessels are broken in pieces, that they may be made anew, vessels of honour, meet for the Master's use. Grievous, however, and dreadful, will be that breaking in pieces, when, having treasured up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, by despising the riches of the Divine Goodness, which the voice of the Son of God hath proclaimed to them; they shall inevitably be overtaken by that tribulation and anguish, which will be rendered unto every soul of man that doeth evil. They loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. The deeds of those who see the Son and believe on him, were not less evil than those of the others, but the one class, though conscious that their deeds were evil, yet were unwilling to consider and acknowledge them to be so very evil, as the voice of the Son of God declared

them to be ; and added this *greatest evil*, to all their other deeds, that they *rejected Him*, who came to turn away every one of them from his iniquities ; while the other class, deeply sensible of the abominable evil of their deeds, having nothing whereby to justify themselves ; and finding no possibility of deliverance from that destruction which is the natural consequence of their great wickedness, but in *the mercy and grace of God*, declared by the voice of his Son ; each one for himself smote upon his breast, that seat of all wickedness, and cried, *God be merciful to me a Sinner!* The voice of the Son of God invited them to come in all their leanness, poverty, and wretchedness ; under deep repentance, and loathing of themselves, to confess their sins ; and they found *him faithful and just to forgive them their sins ; and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness* ; and, leading them to *do Truth*, brings them to the light that their deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought (not now in themselves, but) *in God* :

For the purpose of quickening the dead our Lord received the Divine Spirit not by Measure; which is that *energy whereby he is able even to Subdue all things unto himself*; hence according to his own testimony; *It is the Spirit which quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and Life.* John vi. 63. These words not only declare, that the carnal ordinances of the old dispensation were not in themselves profitable; and were no otherwise useful, than as they directed the attention of men from themselves, to the works of the quickening Spirit; but they were likewise calculated to shew the sense in which our Lord spake and meant to be understood, in his preceding discourse, when he perceived how grossly the carnal reasonings of the Jews applied his words, saying, *how can this man give us flesh to eat?* (Such a question as their ancestors had asked, Psa. lxxviii. 20. Num. xi. 4. and which the Lord answered, in such a way as to shew, that the gratification of their carnal lusts led to Death, as the reward of carnal mindedness.)



When also he knew in himself, that his disciples, who still were fleshly minded, murmured at what they deemed *a hard saying*; He expounded unto them his discourse, by instructing them, that the words which he spake to them could only be understood, in their full and proper import, by the Holy Spirit enlightening their understanding to perceive Spiritual things. His words were the testimony of the living and life working Spirit; and whoever truly received his testimony as he delivered it, received therein the *Spirit* which testified and the *Life* which the witnessing Spirit wrought. Hence he shewed them the reason why he had said to them that no man could come unto him, unless it were given unto him of the Father, who by his Holy Spirit draws men unto the son, that they may find him *The Way, the Truth and the Life.*

The Divine Spirit is styled *the Spirit of Life*, and is truly so; being that energy which quickeneth the Dead, and causeth them to live. Our Lord, after being put to death in the flesh

was *quicken'd by the Spirit*; so all who follow the Lord, from being dead in sins, are *quicken'd and rais'd to renew'd Life*; by the same *quicken'ing Spirit*. Such was the interpretation which the Lord himself gave of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, Chap. xxxvii. The Prophetic voice was connect'd with the Spirit breathing upon them; and in verse 14, the Lord says *I shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live*. Doubtless it was not without a special design that in the 9th verse, the Prophet was not directed to use the expression which denoted the *breath* which was breathed into Adam; but the term (*Rub*) which signifies *Spirit*, because the object of the vision was to exhibit the quickening into a *renew'd Life, by the Word and Spirit of the Lord*, those who had *died in defiling themselves with Idols and detestable things*, where-with they had sinned. The Prophet declares to the People, that when the Lord, by his *Spirit*, causes them to *Live, he will save, or recover, them out of their dwelling places, wherein they had sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be his*

people, and he will be their God. And his servant David, the beloved, shall be King over them; and they all shall have one Shepherd; and they shall walk in his Judgments, and observe his statutes to do them. At the same time that the Lord by his Spirit, causes them to live, and unites them to himself, under the one King, the beloved, he will likewise unite them to one another, by the same Spirit of Love; rooting out, as not of his planting, all the seeds of enmity and discord, from among them. *The stick of Joseph, in the hand of Ephraim* should be united with *the stick of Judah*, and become one stick in the hand of the Lord. They should no more abide in their own dwelling places, wherein they had sinned, but should be saved or recovered out of them, and made to depart out of the rest which they had sought, because it was polluted and would destroy them with a sore destruction; but they should be placed as one holy nation, upon the mountains of Israel, (the wrestler.) *The Sanctuary of the Lord, with his Covenant of Peace* should abide with them. This was to

be a sign whereby the nations should know that it was *the Lord* who sanctified Israel, and corresponds with our Lord's character of his followers, *as a City set upon a hill*. Their good works were so to attract the attention of others, that *they also might be led to glorify our Father who is in Heaven*. So uniform, in every dispensation, are the testimony and operation of the same Divine Spirit; and so invariably directed to the same end; that every individual who hears and believes the voice of the Son of God, and is led by the Holy Spirit, becomes a witness to the precious Truth, and its blessed effects, and thereby invites others to attend to the saving Truth, that they also may be partakers of the Promise of God by Christ in the Gospel; and may, in their turn, become witnesses and inviters; for in the progress of the work of Christ, *the Spirit and the Bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely*.

LETTER XII.

*Life through the Name of Jesus Christ.*

**T**HIS is the *Eternal Life*, that they might know thee, the *Only True God*, and *Jesus Christ* whom thou hast sent. Such is the testimony of our Lord, John xvii. 3. The knowledge of the Father and the Son, in which this Life consists, is only communicated by our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his own testimony, Matth. xi. 27, and Luke x. 22. *No one knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* This Spiritual knowledge

of God and Christ, can only be received by the enlightening operation of the Holy Spirit, opening the hearts and understandings of men to *the things of God*; to know him as *the Only True God*, of whom they had so long been ignorant. While *other lords had held dominion over them*, he had been to them *the Unknown God*, though *he is not far from every one of them*; seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and in him they live, and move, and have their being, Acts xvii. 23, 28. Still, however, they know him not until *the Son reveal him*. When by this revelation their hearts are opened, they are led to understand that, *when they knew not God, they had been engaged in the service of those which by nature are no Gods*, Gal. iv. 8. The heathen had followed their *dumb Idols even as they were led*; the Jews had rested in their *dead works*, without perceiving that *the Law is Spiritual*; and the Nominal Christian had laboured through his *lifeless round of duties*, a stranger to *the things of the Spirit of God*. But when *God shines into their hearts*, manifesting *the Light of*

*the knowledge of his Glory in Christ ; they turn from these things to serve the Living and True God.*

*The Holy Spirit, given unto them, as a well of living waters, springing up to Everlasting Life, sheds abroad the Love of God in their hearts. They speak a new language. We have known and believed the Love that God hath to us. They are constrained by this Love, not now to think of offering thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil ; but to present THEMSELVES, a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, a reasonable service ; in doing Justly, loving Mercy, and walking Humbly with their God, Micah vi. 6, 8. They had been without Christ, without God. They knew not the Father nor the Son. That ignorance had blinded their hearts, and darkened their understandings ; but the Spirit of Life from God, has entered into them, and opened in their hearts the knowledge of the Only True God, and Jesus Christ, the Anointed Restorer, whom he hath sent. From being aliens to the Commonwealth of Israel, they have become fellow citi-*

*zens with the Saints, and of the household of God. They dwell in Love, they dwell in God, and God in them.*

The preaching of our Lord and his Apostles, had the same object in view which the Spirit of Christ in the Prophets had testified ; and to which all the manifestations of God were directed. *Repent ye and believe the Gospel ;* was the sum of our Lord's preaching, Mark i. 15. *Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,* said Peter by the Holy Spirit, Acts iii. 19, as he had said by the same Spirit, chap. ii. 38. *Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of Sins ; and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit ;* and Paul by the same Spirit, Acts xxvi. 20, testified both to Jews and Greeks, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. Hence Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, were what the Apostles testified, Acts xx. 21. As it is the knowledge of the Goodness of God which leadeth men to repentance, Rom. ii. 4, so the



Lord and his Messengers opened such views of the Divine Goodness to mankind, as were calculated by Infinite Wisdom and Graciousness, to work *Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of.* Our Lord Jesus testified, John iii. 16, 17. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, for God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.* The Prophets had testified by the Spirit of Christ, that *whosoever should call upon the name of the Lord should be saved;* and Peter testified to the Jews, by the same Divine Spirit, saying, *Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have Crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts ii. 36. Neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved, Acts iv. 12. To him give all the Prophets witness; that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins, Acts x. 43. God was in Christ*

says Paul, *reconciling the world unto himself, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation,* 2 Cor. v. 19. *God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,* Rom. v. 8. *Herein is Love,* says John, *not that we loved God; but that he loved us, and sent his Son the propitiation, or rather the bearer of mercy for our sins,* 1 John iv. 10. *This is the Record, that God hath given to us Eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son,* chap. v. 11. These are a few out of the very many instances of the kind, of which, indeed, when rightly understood, the Scriptures will be found to be full. In the name of the Lord, proclaimed to Moses, as recorded in Exodus xxxiv. the very first view of the Divine Character which meets our eye is MERCY. *The Lord God, Merciful and Gracious, Long Suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, &c.* This manifestation of the Divine character was connected with a positive prohibition of making

any Covenant with the Idolaters and following their ways. This sentiment is expressed, Psalm lxxxv. 8. *God the Lord, will speak peace to his people, and to his Saints; but let them not turn again to folly.* But it is not needful to multiply quotations; no Christian can be unacquainted with these Truths; and it is simply impossible that any sentiments opposite to these should be found in any revelation from God, when rightly understood; because these views delineate the Divine Character and his Gracious purposes, and nothing that is inconsistent with these can possibly be true of *him who changeth not.*

The Doctrine of Divine Truth, as exhibited in the Scriptures, like the perfections of its Blessed Author, is harmonious in all its parts; unincumbered with those difficulties, which press, with insurmountable force upon the theological schemes devised by human wisdom. It needs no defence against the weakness of the Arminian Scheme, which represents a great proportion of mankind as irrecoverably lost,

through the perverseness of their own wills; notwithstanding the Gracious designs of God, and the Wisdom and Energy with which he employs those means which will make his Grace abound over sin. Nor has it to encounter the horrors connected with the gloomy system of John Calvin; which represents, or rather misrepresents, that a great proportion of mankind, by an irreversible decree, without regard to their own conduct, are predestinated to Eternal Misery, and this Misery augmented by their having rejected the Gospel, through absolute necessity, which Gospel, it is said, was never intended for any benefit to them.\* This is represented as being to the praise of God's *glorious Justice*, (which in this view must be considered as diametrically opposite to his *Glorious Goodness*; for the perfections of God, who *is Good and doeth Good*, cannot possibly harmonise in any work but in *doing Good*.) But the Lord hath testified, Mat. xv. 13. *Every plant*

\* Modern Calvinism, however much softened in words, still results in the same principle.

*which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.*

Those to whom our Lord hath *revealed the Father*, and whom he has renewed to Spiritual Life by *the Spirit which quickeneth*; are brought to know that *the Father is the Only True God*, by this revelation which the Son hath given, John xvii. 3. Their understandings are opened to know that HE is the original inexhaustible fountain, from *whom every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh down*, James i. 17, and that unto *Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, as his *Unspeakable Gift, all Power in heaven and in earth is given*, for the very purpose of employing *the good means*, as well as for accomplishing *the perfect end*. Compare Psalm lxviii. 18, 19, 20, with Ephes. iv. 7 to 13, and 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

*They know that the Son of God is come, and has given them an Understanding that they may know HIM THAT IS TRUE*, 1 John v. 20. They had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, and supposed that they had known him. This

knowledge, while they sought no farther, puffed them up; so that they thought of themselves more highly than they ought to have thought. They knew nothing yet as they ought to know; but deceived themselves. *They knew not God.* The evidence of their ignorance was their *walking in darkness.* But when brought to see Jesus Christ, the Image of the Invisible God, and to know that whosoever seeth him in his proper character, seeth the Father in him, and him in the Father, they perceive that they had been uttering what they understood not; things too wonderful for them which they knew not. They are led to say with Job, *I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,* Job xlii. 5, 6. This is the very state to which the voice of the Son of God was designed to bring them. Opening their understandings to that Goodness of God which leadeth to repentance, and that Life which is in the Son of God; they are led to behold as in a Mirror,

the Glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, so as to be united to the Father and the Son, by the Spirit of the Lord. *They are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ.* They know in their happy experience that *this is the True God, and the Eternal Life.* Their eyes having been opened, they knew that they were naked and miserable through their wickedness. There was no hope for them but in the forgiveness of their sins through the Mercy of God; and the Son so revealed the Father to them, as to convince them that *there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared; that with the Lord there is Mercy, and plenteous Redemption; and that he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities,* Psalm cxxx. Therefore they are encouraged to *hope in the Lord.* They are convinced that this Graciousness is not transitory and changeable; but that it is a permanent principle of Divine Goodness; being an essential part of the Character of *the Only True God,* as delineated by Himself, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, hence they are encouraged to *trust in the Lord*

*forever.* This perception of the Divine Graciousness and long-suffering, melts their hearts into that Godly sorrow for their sins, which worketh *Repentance unto Salvation*; so that while they are brought to loathe themselves, because of all their abominations; they find all their consolation; all that their hearts can now desire; goodness infinitely beyond what they can conceive or express; flowing, as a well spring of Spiritual Life, from the inexhaustible fountain; with such Divine condescension, that while it represses and destroys their pride, and every evil thought; fills them with joy unspeakable and full of Glory, and convinces them that they have found *The True God, and the Eternal Life*; and brings them to cry, in the language of the Prophet, *Lo: this is our God; we have waited for Him; He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.* Isai. xxv. 9.

This change from Death in Sins, to Life in Jesus Christ, or from spiritual Death to the re-



newal of Spiritual Life, is spoken of in the New Testament, by various expressions, as *begotten again*, James i. 18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of Truth*, compare 1 Pet. i. 3. *Born again* 1 Pet. i. 23. *Being born again—by the word of the Living God*, John iii. 3, 5. *Born from above.—Born of Water and the Spirit.* *A new Creation*, 2 Cor. v. 17. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new Creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.* Hence *New-born babes; the New man; New Creature; Renewed in the Spirit of the Mind, &c.* are terms frequently met with in the writings of the Apostles; all having reference to that change effected by the awakening *voice of the Son of God, and the Spirit that quickeneth*; whereby God produceth in man all those Divine tempers and powers, which, in his state of Alienation from God, are not in him; and thereby destroys all the evil thoughts and fleshly lusts that are in him; for *God hath chosen the things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are*; in order that

he may totally subvert *the boasting of all flesh before him.*

Among the earliest appearances of life, in the infant born into this world, are crying, which is a sign of want ; and feeling the need of the milk of the breast, and the care of the parent, which are adapted for supplying the wants of the babe, incapable of helping itself. In like manner, among the first effects of being quickened from Spiritual Death, or being born again, are a sense of want, and feeling the need of the sincere milk of the word, and of the Gracious care of the Lord ; nothing else is fit to supply the wants of those who are born from above. Nothing but tasting the Graciousness of the Lord can satisfy the desires now awakened. *The desire of their souls is to his name, and to the remembrance of Him. In the seasons of darkness the Soul desires Him. The Spirit will seek him early, Isa. xxvi.* But this Seeking the Lord with the Soul and Spirit, is the Spirit and practice of Prayer ; and though they know not what they should pray for as

they ought, their hearts are turned to him in earnest desire; and the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, which, according to his promise, he pours upon them, helpeth their weakness; and with unutterable groanings, intercedes for them according to the will of God, and intercedes not in vain. They are now made sensible of their poverty, their weakness, their needs: their hearts sigh after the Divine Fullness treasured up in Christ, they need the support of the Lord, and cry to him whose strength alone can save them. The Lord hears and answers them, *For the oppression of the Poor, for the Sighing of the Needy, now will I arise saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.* Psalm xii. 5.

## LETTER XIII.

*The Nazarite.*

**I**N all ages, and under every dispensation, the purposes of God have been in some measure unfolded, and the means and progress of their accomplishment exhibited, in such portions and measures as the Wisdom of God saw meet. The Spirit of God taught the same doctrines, and led the believers to the same holiness; whether under the types and shadows of the Mosaic Economy, or the more open and unveiled manifestations in the New Testament. The faithful servants of God were, ac-

ording to their measure, made partakers of Spiritual Life through *the Name of the Anointed Restorer*. This may be seen in many ancient types and emblems opened to our view by the Divine Spirit in the New Testament. As an instance of this, we may take for the present subject of consideration, the character of

### THE NAZARITE.

IN Matthew ii. 23. we read, that when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to dwell in a City called Nazareth, this event took place that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, *He shall be called a Nazarene*. There is indeed no such prediction, in express terms, in any of the Prophetic writings; but from the Evangelist's saying, *it was spoken by the Prophets*; without referring to any particular Prophecy; it would seem to intend the *Character of the Nazarite*, which was to be fulfilled in Jesus, as being *separated to the Lord*; which was the general testimony of all the Prophets;

of which, his going to dwell in Nazareth, was an external indication. Hence we are naturally led to consider the character of the Nazarite, and the use of the figure.

The institution, or more properly, *the Law of the Nazarite*, is recorded in the sixth chapter of the book of Numbers; where we find that the name *Nazarite*, denotes one *Separated to the Lord*. This separation was to be *Voluntary*, a self-devotedness by *Vow*; a deliberate resolution, publicly expressed; whereby the Nazarite *Separated himself to the Lord*. He was to Separate himself from *Wine*, and from *strong drink*, and from *Vinegar* of Wine or of Strong drink; He was to eat nothing of the product of the vine *from the kernel to the husk* nor to eat *grapes, moist or dried*. No razor was to come upon his head; but his locks were to continue growing all the days of his separation; and as he was to be holy to the Lord himself, so he was not to defile himself with any thing dead, nor with any uncleanness of others, even his nearest kindred; for *the consecration of his God*

*was upon his head.* When the days of his Separation were accomplished, he was to bring his offerings to the Tabernacle; the Priest was to present them before the Lord. The Nazarite was then to shave his head and put the hair in the fire under the Peace-Offering. The shoulder, a cake, and a wafer of the Peace-Offering were then to be put on his hand by the Priest; the Priest should wave them before the Lord, after which the Nazarite might drink wine.

In the various particulars mentioned in this chapter, we may perceive the Character of our Lord, exhibited in the figure; as going before his Sheep; having in all things the pre-eminence. With these particulars all the Prophets were well acquainted; and by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, were taught their application to *Him*, of whom Moses in the Law, had written; hence the voice of all the Prophets was, *He shall be called a Nazarene.* His voluntary separation, and devotedness to the Lord are expressed in the fortieth Psalm. *Lo I Come.—I delight to do thy will O God. Yea*

*thy Law is within my heart*, confirmed by his own testimony, John vi. 38. *I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will; but the will of him who sent me.* His separation from those earthly things which exhilarate and intoxicate the minds of men, represented under the similitudes of *Wine* and *Strong drink*; marked his dependence for strength and blessedness, upon his God and Father. He was a *man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief; despised and disesteemed; persecuted; He had not where to lay his head.* The consecration of his God was upon his head. *The Father had Sanctified and sent him into the world.—He Sanctified himself; that the works of the Father which he did might bear witness of his vow, and were at once his adorning, and the fruits of his consecration.* As he was holy himself, so he was not contaminated with the uncleanness of others; not even of his kindred according to the flesh. *He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners.* As the antitype of Daniel, who had purposed in his heart that he



would not defile himself with the meat and wine of the kings of the earth. He was filled with wisdom and understanding ; so that there was none like him for revealing the deep things of God. Like Samuel, he was established a Prophet of the Lord, mighty in word and deed before God and all the people. Like Sampson, he was appointed the deliverer of Israel ; and the overcoming of enemies by his death was greater than all that he had done in his life.—These types performed their respective parts in the figure ; in Him the whole of the truth, which they prefigured, had its fulfilment. At the accomplishment of his vow, his obedience and wonderful works, which had been growing without interruption, during his whole life, were taken off from the earthly exhibition, united and offered up to God with the Spiritual Sacrifice of Peace Offering ; when He who is *Our Peace*, took away the wall of partition from between the Jews and the Gentiles ; to reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross ; and opening a new and living way, gave both access by one Spirit unto the Father.

In the law of the Nazarite, however, there is a provision, which shews, that though the general character was to be fulfilled in the only-begotten Son of God, as having in all things the pre-eminence, yet it was not intended to be confined to him individually; but was to extend to *either man or woman who should separate themselves to the Lord*; as the text expresses it. The provision referred to is in verses 9, 10, 11, and 12. which were not, and could not be applicable to Jesus Christ. Hence we are led to contemplate the character of Our Blessed Lord as the pattern to which we ought to be conformed; and to consider the law in its application to those who follow *the true Nazarite in whom God is well pleased.*

Those who hear the word of the Son, and believe on the Father, who hath sent him, *voluntarily separate themselves to the Lord.* They are invited, with promises, to separate themselves from all abominations, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.—*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the*

*Lord, and touch not the unclean ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* The Nazarite was to separate himself from wine and strong drink, from the vinegar of both, and from every product of the vine. The Christian is to separate himself from whatever intoxicates the mind with earthly things, and debases the powers or faculties which God hath given him. Self-denial, and taking up the Cross, are indispensable in those who will follow Jesus Christ. Using this world as not abusing it, or that temperate use of lawful things which becomes Christians, who seek not their best comforts from the intoxicating indulgence of the taste for even the most excellent of earthly things ; but look for the elevating comforts and gladness of heart which leaves no sting nor depression in the review, the joy unspeakable and full of Glory ; not in the abundance of corn and wine, but in the Love of God, manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord ; who has testified that man shall not live by

bread alone ; but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Daniel and his fellows had fet their hearts to seek the Lord their God, and had purposed in their hearts that they would not defile themselves with the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank ; but would keep themselves pure ; and God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom ; so that in all matters of wisdom and understanding, there was none like them ; for they were found ten times better than all the wise ones who had not so separated themselves ; infomuch that even the king himself was constrained to acknowledge the true God, and to bear testimony to the decided superiority of that Wisdom which Daniel had received from the most high God. It is in the way of self-denial, and separating ourselves from indulging the lusts of the flesh and of the mind that we are to seek that wisdom of God, which is revealed to them who as babes in Christ, are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts of earthly consolation, that

they may seek the wisdom that cometh from above, which God gives liberally to all who, feeling their need of it, ask in Faith, and they shall receive it; for according to our Lord's rule, the only way to increase in Spiritual wisdom and knowledge is, to do the will of God; and the reason is obvious; because by thus separating ourselves from evil, and denying ourselves from excess in things lawful; the mind becomes habituated to Spiritual contemplation and to heavenly practice; and we well know, that to whatever objects the mind is led by habit, and the practice uniformly directed, there is the line of pursuit in which greater improvement may be expected, and greater proficiency acquired. This is the case in earthly pursuits; but much more so in the heavenly course; where the new man is, by the Divine Spirit, renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness of the Truth, after the Image of him who created him, seeing by this separation and self-denial, and keeping the heart devoted to the will of God, the obstacles are re-

moved, and the Christian labours, striving, not against, but according to, the working of the Spirit of the living God, which worketh in him mightily, to form him after the Image of the only-begotten Son of God.

The hair of the Nazarite's head was to grow all the days of his vow. This was to be his badge of distinction, and was to continue without interruption until it had attained all the maturity which the time of separation admitted. The fruits of Righteousness which the Christians are to cultivate, are to be uninterrupted in their growth until the time of the harvest. *The love of God, shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, as the Seed of God, shoots forth, and produces The works of Faith, the Labours of Love, and the Patience of Hope, in the sight of God, even our Saviour. If ye Love me, says our Lord, keep my Commandments:—hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye Love one another.* This is their badge of distinction, by which they themselves are adorned, and by which they adorn the doctrine God our Sa-

viour in all things. Hence it is enjoined on them to be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord. They delight in the Law of God, and are devoted to do or suffer whatever they know to be the will of God; thereby approving themselves as the followers of Him, who came not to do his own will, but the will of Him who sent him.*

It is observable of Sampson, that his extraordinary strength was connected with the continued growth, and preservation of his hair. The Spiritual strength of the separated ones, upon whose head is the consecration of their God, is not their own; but like Sampson's, is the Gift of God. They are *strong in the Lord, and in the power of HIS might.* The continuance and increase of this Spiritual strength, whereby *they are made more than conquerors* over all their enemies, *through him who loveth them,* is necessarily connected with their continuing and increasing in Holiness, and in all the fruits of the Spirit, whereby they *grow in grace, and in the*

*knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Hence arises the necessity of their watchfulness, that they may beware, not only of evil thoughts arising in their own hearts, and thereby defiling them; but also that they may not be defiled by the deadness of others, even of those who are most dear to them according to the flesh. This indeed cannot injure them without their having such connection with them as to make themselves unclean thereby, as a voluntary action. The Christian ought to be *holy to the Lord*, all his days, and to be constantly on his guard against sudden contamination, that he may not be partaker of other men's sins; lest *when his Lord cometh suddenly*, he be found off his guard, *eating and drinking with the drunken*, and thereby *hath defiled the head of his consecration.* *All his righteousness that he hath done*, is cut off, like the hair of the Nazarite's head in the day of his defilement.

But the Lord, who *knoweth our frame*, and *remembereth that we are dust*; who well knew how ready we were to turn aside like a deceit-



ful bow ; determined not utterly to reject those who fell, *The Lord will not cast off forever ; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his tender mercies,* Lam. iii. 31, 32. Contemplating the Nazarites, who had been *purer than Snow, whiter than Milk, more ruddy in body than rubies,* and whose *polishing* had been *of Sapphire ;* when *their visage* had become *blacker than a coal,* when *they were not known in the streets,* but *their skin cleaved to their bones,* and became *withered like a stick,* chap. iv. 7, 8. even then he did not forsake them ; but provided for the recovery of the defiled Nazarite, who was to bring his offering to the Lord for reconciliation, and on presenting his trespass-offering, his head should again be hallowed that he might consecrate anew to the Lord the days of his separation. This was to be done by the ministry of the Priest, that he might be holy to the Lord. The Apostle shews us the Spirit of this in the New Testament, 1 John ii. 1, 2. *My little Children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not ; and*

*if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. He is the bearer of Mercy, for our Sins. It was for this very purpose that God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins, Acts v. 31. Hence in the beautiful parable of the lost sheep, our Lord exhibits to us such an interesting view of his own character and work, as rejoicing over the lost sheep which he had recovered.*

The Nazarite, deeply humbled by his fall, would in future be more on his guard, and strongly impressed with the necessity of constant dependance upon his God, that he might be preserved in the way in which he ought to walk. In the New Testament, the Apostle tells us that *Godly sorrow worketh repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of.* The Christian who feels his own weakness, and laments his backsliding is more and more led to seek to that strength which is made perfect in weakness. When humbled under a deep sense of his departure from following the Lord, his

heart will be filled with gratitude for that mercy wherewith the Lord has called him to return. So it was with Sampson, who tempted the Lord, and went on in evil till his locks were shorn, and his strength departed; while he said he would go out and shake himself as at other times; not knowing that by having turned away from the source of his strength he no longer enjoyed its invigorating power; his enemies prevailed against him, bound him, and brought him into servitude; but when Sampson was brought low, the Lord, in mercy, caused his hair to grow again, and his strength returned according to his prayer; till he obtained a greater victory over his enemies at last, than all that he had atchieved before. In like manner, whenever the Christian turns away from that state of separation whereby he had devoted himself to the Lord, he turns away from the source of all his support; and although the Lord bear long with him; yet if he continue in forsaking the Lord, he suffers his enemies to bring him into captivity and

hard bondage. He sees it meet to cause grief, and to bring down the transgressor to taste of great bitterness; yet even this valley of Achor shall shew a door of hope. The Lord, who waiteth that he may be gracious, may see meet that the thorns among which he is caught, like Manasseh of old, should still remain in the flesh of the backslider, that he may no more have any confidence in the flesh, but look, and earnestly seek for that Grace which alone is sufficient for him, and that strength which is made perfect in weakness, that in the valley of humility he may bring forth anew the precious fruits of Spiritual Life to the Glory of God, and may be led to know that notwithstanding his own weakness, he can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth him, and leadeth him on to more than victory, for *the Youths shall faint and be weary, and the Young men shall utterly fall; but they that trust in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as Eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.*

The close of the Nazarite's course was to be with Sacrifices. The obvious design of the burnt and sin-offerings was to be an emblem of the destruction of sin, or what in the New Testament is styled, the Crucifixion or death of the Old man; that the body of sin may be destroyed; that Christians should not serve sin. In the case of the Nazarite, doubtless it was designed for the same purpose; that he who had been separated to the Lord, should not turn again to folly. The Peace-offering corresponded with the thank-offerings; and was an emblematic ascription of thanks to God for the Peace connected with *Separation to the Lord*, and of Gratitude to him who had supported the Nazarite to the close of his vow, which he had now paid. A sentiment like this appears to be expressed, Psalm cxvi. 12,—19. The Nazarite's Peace-offering was to be according to the law of the Peace-offerings, Levit. vii. 11, &c. it was to be offered for a thanksgiving, and with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he should offer unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil. These

were to be offered with the Sacrifice of thanksgiving of his Peace-offerings, verse xiii. No doubt what Peter styles *Spiritual Sacrifices*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. and Paul, Heb. xiii. 15. *the Sacrifice of praise to God.*—*The fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name*, had reference to the Sacrifices of thankfulness under the law. The unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and wafers anointed with oil, would, in the language of the New Testament, be expressive of the Spiritual food, with which the Christian is supported; and the connecting of them in the Sacrifice of thanksgiving of the Peace-offering, may well be understood as a public acknowledgment that all our Peace, and Spiritual strength and support, is to be ascribed to God. When the Nazarite shaved his head, he was to put the hair of his locks of separation in the fire under the Peace-offering, that all should ascend to God in one general sacrifice of thankfulness; does it not well correspond with the language of the Prophet, *Lord, thou also hast wrought all our works in us?* and of the Apostle—*It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good plea-*

sure? As it is Christ who liveth in the Christian, so the fruits which he brings forth are the works of that same Spirit; and therefore in their sacrifices of thanksgiving, the fruit of their lips will express the same sentiment with David, 1 Chron. xxix. 14—*all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.* When the Christian has finished the days of his separation, and his obedience is matured for the harvest; *the ingathering must be holy to the Lord, as the first fruits were holy.* Afterwards the Nazarite might drink wine. Does it not forcibly bring to our minds, as its antitype, our Lord's words to his Disciples, Luke xxii. 29, 30. *I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom.* Even in the present imperfect state, we have the earnest of those Spiritual blessings expressed by the words of our Lord; but the full enjoyment of them can only be entered on when *this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and that saying that is written shall be brought to pass, Death is swallowed up in Victory.*

## LETTER XIV.

*The Spirit of Meekness.*

**A**MONG all the perfections which are united in our blessed Lord, none more strongly mark his character than the Meekness and Lowliness by which he is distinguished. Whether we consider him as *the Image of the Invisible God*, manifesting the long-suffering kindness of our Heavenly Father, waiting to be gracious unto us; or set forth as the pattern to which we are to be conformed, according to the Divine appointment; or rather as uniting both these views; this characteristic of our



Lord is of peculiar importance, both to our understanding and possessing the *Christian Life*.

In this character the Prophet represents the King of Zion and Jerusalem, Zach. ix. 9. and the Evangelist marks the verification of the prophecy, Mat. xxi. 5. presenting him to our view as the *Meek one*. *I am meek and Lowly in heart*, said Jesus. It is recorded of Moses, Num. xii. 3. that he was very Meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth; yet his Spirit was so provoked at the waters of Strife, that he spake unadvisedly with his lips, and therefore could not enter into the rest; Num. xx. Psal. cvi. 33. But the meekness of Our Lord was perfect; no temptation overcame him; no irritation provoked him so as to speak unadvisedly; no trial overcame his fortitude; because he had devoted himself, not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who had sent him. Meekness was conspicuous in his whole deportment, bearing full witness that *the Spirit of Meekness* was in his heart. In him was manifested the perfection of that Charity

or Love which the Apostle saith, *suffereth long and still is kind.* He was manifested for the very purpose of exhibiting the inextinguishable kindness of God, that Love, which by long-suffering graciousness, and invincible perseverance, should at last assimilate all rational beings into its own likeness. It was in this character that the Lord came into Jerusalem, that he might cleanse his Father's house, and restore it to its original use, and it is in the same Spirit of Meekness that he comes into the hearts of those who will hear his voice, that he may purify them from all their defilements to be temples of the Holy Spirit, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. They know him in this Character, and learning his Meekness and Lowliness, feel the power and importance of their pattern. This is the principle upon which the Apostle introduces a motive, which he well knew would have great influence with Christians; *I beseech you by the Meekness and Gentleness of Christ.* He considers it as powerful an argument as when he says, *I beseech you by the*

*Mercies of God* ; to which indeed it has very near affinity, or rather is the very same thing ; for *the Mercies of God*, are exhibited in *the Meekness and Gentleness of Christ*.

*Learn of me*, saith he, *for I am Meek and Lowly in Heart*, and ye shall find again rest to your Souls. We are to learn this Meekness and Lowliness from Him, in order that we may learn of Christ to walk as he also walked, that doing his commandments, we may abide in his Love, even as he also kept his Father's commandments, and abode in his Love. We had gone astray from Him who is the true rest ; and never, till we are restored to this state of mind, can we again find *the Rest wherewith the weary shall be caused to rest*. When we are brought to this state, we shall know that it is not our own work, but our Lord's own Spirit of Meekness and Lowliness shed abroad in our hearts. It is Christ himself dwelling in our hearts by faith, and filling us with peace and joy in believing and obeying Him. This Meekness is one of the fruits of the Spirit,

Gal. v. 23. Hence we are instructed to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all **LOWLINESS AND MEEKNESS**, with long Suffering, forbearing one another in Love; endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3. to put on Meekness, as one of the Characters of the elect of God, Col. iii. 12. to follow Meekness, 1 Tim. vi. 11. as the Prophet had directed to seek Meekness, Zeph. ii. 3. to receive with Meekness the ingrafted word, James i. 21. to show, out of a good conversation, our works with Meekness of Wisdom, ch. iii. 13.

In the deportment of Christians towards one another they are to walk in *the Spirit of Meekness*; thereby securing the affections of their Brethren, and inviting to Love and to good works; even when any one of their society has sinned and continued to disregard their Love, so as to be counted as *a heathen man and a Publican*: If he be brought to repentance and confession of his sins, he is to be restored in the same *Spirit of Meekness*. But it is not only in

their conduct towards one another that Christians are to walk in the steps of their Lord; when called upon by others for a reason of the hope that is in them, they are to give that reason *with Meekness and fear*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. and *in Meekness* to instruct those who oppose themselves, 2 Tim. ii. 25. and finally *to shew all Meekness unto all men*, Tit. iii. 2. that the whole of their deportment may bear full witness of their being led by the Spirit of God, and approving themselves his Children.

The Meekness of our Lord rested on that ground which is the proper foundation of all genuine Meekness: a perfect resignation of the heart and will to the will of God. In exact proportion as our hearts have learned to say, *Father, not our will; but thine be done*; in the same degree have we learned the Meekness and Lowliness of Jesus Christ. From this resignation will arise confidence in that grace which is always sufficient for us; in that strength which is perfected in weakness; and consequently that fortitude which is essential to the very existence of

Meekness; which enables the followers of Jesus to bear reproaches, affronts, and injuries with evenness of temper, and firm composure of mind; committing the keeping of their Souls in well-doing to Him, as to a Faithful Creator, who, while they seek Him, will never leave them nor forsake them. This mildness, softness, and gentleness of temper, not easily discomposed, nor soon angry, is connected with that lowliness and humbleness of mind which knows and feels its own weakness; and looks away from itself, to seek and find all its sufficiency in Jesus Christ.

The *Meek of the earth* are called to *seek the Lord*, Zeph. ii. 3. and when they seek him in Meekness, they enter into the enjoyment of the promises. *The Meek shall increase their Joy in the Lord*, Isai. xxix. 19. *He will guide them in Judgment*, Psal. xxv. 9. *God arises to Save them*, Psal. lxxvi. 9. *He lifts them up*, cxlvii. 6. *He will beautify them with Salvation*, cxlix. 4. *They shall eat and be satisfied*, xxii. 26. *They shall inherit the earth*, xlvii. 11. Math. v. 5

Meditate upon these, and you will find them opening a rich and inexhaustible mine of heart-reviving consolation during your pilgrimage; and giving a foretaste of the blessedness which awaits the children of God when they shall arrive at their Father's house, whither Jesus will take them.

The Spirit of Meekness is to be in constant operation in the Christian; it is to be the Spirit of his life; and while he keeps in this Spirit, it will disarm what are called *the ills of life*, of the greatest part of their bitterness. It will lead him to observe the hand, and the goodness of God, where the want of this Spirit would render him incapable of perceiving any thing but the bitterness and distress which these ills occasion. Even the hardest trials to which the Christian is exposed, will be softened and smoothed by the Spirit of Meekness, while submitting himself to the Will of God, he derives strength for more than victory, from the fulness treasured up in Christ, the pattern of Meekness. Looking unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of

Faith, he will endure his trials, in the precious hope of partaking with Jesus in his Glory; when having fought the good fight, and kept the Faith, he shall be prepared to receive the Crown. Being the ruling temper of his mind, it will go with him where he goes; in his family it will not only prevent much uneasiness, but will give a dignity, and solid importance to his character. His instructions to his family and domestics, given with coolness and Judgment, will be the more likely to be respectfully received. It will go with him to his work, and whether in the farm or the shop, his mind being unruffled by trifling vexations, he will the more clearly perceive the steps which he ought to take. In his intercourse with the world, *the Spirit of Meekness* will disarm the difficulties which he may meet with, of their hurtful power; while possessing his soul in Meekness and patience, the adversary will be prevented from obtaining advantage over him. Even should he be overcome by temptation, and sin against the Lord; the habits of sub-



mission, previously induced by the Spirit of Meekness, will facilitate his recovery from the error of his way; and bring him by unfeigned repentance, and increased self-abasement, to *confess his Sins to the Lord, who is Faithful and Just to forgive him his Sins; and to cleanse him from all Unrighteousness.*

In every department of life, the Spirit of Meekness is of the greatest importance to man. In the world, it was well observed by Solomon, that *a soft answer turneth away wrath.* The soft answer is the native fruit of Meekness; and who has not observed its benign tendency to soften the angry passions, both in the bosom of the Meek man, (for he also is a man,) and in the opposer who would have done him injury? In Christian Society, it is indispensably necessary for *keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace,* and preventing the springing up of any root of bitterness, which might cause trouble and defilement, and thereby undermine that Love and harmony by which the disciples of *Him who is Meek and lowly in heart*

should be distinguished ; and in domestic life, how many trifles, which singly are not worth naming, yet if suffered to grow, like sparks, would accumulate, till they broke out into a flame, destructive of the peace of families and neighbourhoods, are checked, and extinguished by the Spirit of Meekness ?

But the Wisdom and Goodness of our Heavenly Father, who is ever watchful for the happiness of his creatures, has appointed the Spirit of Meekness its place in the very foundation of Society. The Female heart was formed to be the seat of Meekness and Love. The woman was designed to be a help meet for man ; to soothe and soften the mind of her partner. Such a help he needed, and still needs. It is the sweetly attractive power of Meekness and Modesty, appearing in the Virgin deportment, which, more than beauty, captivates the heart, and engages the best affections of man ; chastened and purified from every licentious thought ; and which, by presenting the prospect of permanent happiness, leads to that best of all earthly con-

nections, the Marriage Union; an Union, virtuous, holy, and *more than earthly*; induced by the rational persuasion; honourable to *the virtuous woman*, that, in the language of Scripture, *the heart of her husband may safely trust in her.*—That *she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.* Equally fitted to participate and to increase that happiness which is not confined to earthly things; but while it gives a peculiar relish to present enjoyments, raises the well grounded hope to that ever increasing felicity which they know to be the portion of the Meek and Lowly heart.—They are *Heirs together of the Grace of life.*

On the contrary, whenever these interesting graces of Meekness and Modesty are deficient, where, from their intrinsic excellence, they ought to predominate, being of inestimable value; however superior may be the beauty and external accomplishments of the woman, and however largely, what are called, the gifts of fortune, may be bestowed on her, the truly virtuous youth, whose views of happiness rise

beyond mere sensual gratification, or splendid appearance; will shrink at the idea of such a partner for life, and turn from the object with a mixture of pity and disgust; whatever other advantages she may possess, she will in reality be the object of attraction, only to the libertine, the fool, or the fortune-hunter. Alike incapable of promoting, and of enjoying, the most exalted kind of domestic felicity; weariness, dissipation, and disappointment are likely to attend her.

But it is in the married state, which is the proper foundation of society, that these endearing excellencies are more particularly called into exercise, in the Female character; and their effects on the happiness of the possessor, on the family of which she is now the Mistress, and on the circle of her neighbourhood, come to be felt, as blessings of peculiar importance.

The Marriage Union was instituted by God himself, as the most important of all earthly relations; and the foundation from which every estimable relation springs. Honourable in it-

self, it is to those who are united in the Love of God and of one another, the source of the purest felicity which can be enjoyed on earth; giving them a foretaste of that blessedness which shall be consummated in heaven. They have in their happy connection, a lively image of the union between Jesus Christ and the Church; and while they, as fellow heirs of the Grace of Life, are mutually helping and encouraging one another, their example will have a diffusive and happy influence on the circle of their acquaintance; so that others, seeing their good works, may be led to Glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

Marriages, however, are not all of this class. It often happens that the union takes place between persons, who love one another, indeed; but who, in the transaction, have very little if any view to the Glory of God. Like the bulk of mankind, at their age, they may not have begun to think of any thing beyond earthly enjoyments; of these, they have promised to themselves a large share, and while health and

prosperity continue, may think that they have obtained their end; but when sickness, or what are called misfortunes, take place, they will find their hopes built on a sandy foundation; for God, who loves them, will most likely mingle in their cup such ingredients as may startle them, and lead them to consider that something else is needful to happiness, which they had not before thought of. While he thus brings home to their feelings, and shows to their understanding, the instability of earthly things, and invites their attention to the voice of his Son; it is most likely that the Female heart may be first awakened to seek a more permanent support, which will not fail in the day of adversity; and deeply humbled in heart, will seek help of the Lord, and will not seek in vain. Her eyes being now opened, she will learn of Jesus, who is Meek and Lowly in heart and in her weakness, will find support in his strength. (For it is a fact well known in the History of Christianity, and no less honourable to the Female character than true and singular,

that Women have more generally, and with greater readiness, received the Gospel, and been more exemplary in their obedience, than Men.) Meanwhile her husband may be still engaged in the bustle of the world, pursuing the phantoms of vanity, in quest of happiness, which can never be found in that course. Vexed by disappointments and mortifications of pride; (to say nothing of remorse for evil conduct,) perhaps he comes home in ill humour, and may even be found to treat the meek submission of his spouse with petulant asperity, and possibly insult her devout humility with the contemptuous epithets of hypocrisy or enthusiasm.—It may also happen, that a young woman of serious mind, who had in a considerable degree learned of *Him who is Meek and Lowly in heart*, is sought after by a man in many respects amiable and worthy, who yet has no serious thoughts of Religion; a subject which in such cases is too seldom an object of inquiry. His honourable affections may have been particularly drawn to her by the Meekness and Modesty

of her deportment; for these graces are always attractive to a man of sense; and she, willing to hope the best of a beloved, and generally deserving object, becomes united to him in marriage; after some sober reflection, if her own heart is not turned away from the Lord, she perceives with considerable uneasiness that their hearts are not in unison in the most important of all considerations. If he is indeed a man of sense, though he does not share the religious sentiment with his partner, he will esteem her, and treat her with tenderness and indulgence; a Blessing which will excite her gratitude, and redouble her assiduities to promote his best happiness. But this is not often the case; it more frequently happens that the Religious wife will be treated at best with indifference, and not seldom, with derision or severity.—In such circumstances *the Spirit of Meekness* is tried, and its peculiar importance comes to be felt; and the blessedness of Resignation to, and Trusting in, the Lord will be particularly experienced. It requires the for-



itude which the Divine Spirit alone can give to support the heart, and tranquillize it under such pressure.—These are no imaginary suppositions; unhappily they have been too often exemplified by distressing realities in domestic life.

While the Wisdom and Goodness of God has appointed to the wife her proper station, he has also shewed the very great importance of that station, and the blessed effects which may be expected to result from the operation of the Spirit of Meekness and Modesty exemplified in the chaste and respectful behaviour of the wife in her proper sphere, 1 Pet. iii. 1—6. *Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a MEEK AND*

QUIET SPIRIT, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

There will many circumstances occur, in which this heavenly disposition will be found indispensably requisite for the happiness of the Godly woman herself, and for the peace and comfort of her family. To share and alleviate the distresses of her husband; to treat him with most sincere affection, and cordial sympathy; to rejoice with him in prosperity; in adversity to soothe and harmonize his temper; and with modest diffidence, to endeavour to lead him to that unfeigned resignation to the Will of God, to which her loving example, and serenity of mind kindly invite him. The management of children, also, is her particular province, and besides the maternal solicitude for their welfare in infancy, the supply of their wants, the miti-

gation of their distresses and the general preservation of their health ; the information of their minds is a task of peculiar importance. In that period, when the tender mind is so strongly susceptible of impressions, which will carry their influence into every period of life, how important is it both to the individual and to society that the moral ideas impressed on the mind in early life, should be the best possible ! and who so fit an instrument to impress on the Young mind excellent sentiments as the Mother who draws her information from the source of Infinite Wisdom and Benevolence ! But while she is exerting all her powers to imbue their minds with the best information, it is of the highest importance that her own example should illustrate the instructions which she gives them. It is well known that Children are very quick in observing any passion or peevishness in their Mother ; and every such observation tends to diminish their respect and reverence for her ; hence the importance of that evenness of temper which arises from *the Spirit*

*of Meekness.* It is not enough that they should receive instruction by *line upon line, and precept upon precept*; but these instructions require to be confirmed by *example upon example* also; that the rising plants which ought to support and adorn society, may receive with avidity, and retain with respectful confidence, those lessons which they see exemplified in the life and conduct of their instructress. Such was the manner in which our Blessed Lord conveyed and confirmed his instructions to his disciples, and such, in a measure, will be the conduct of his faithful servants in whom he manifests his own Meek and Lowly Spirit, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

“ Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,

“ To teach the Young Idea how to shoot.”

So says the Poet; but the task is not always delightful; even in the same family, the children will exhibit very different dispositions.—Some of them great and almost unconquerable obduracy and perverseness, which are very apt to “ grow with their growth, and strengthen

with their strength;" and a successful issue, even to the best endeavours, is often almost beyond hope. The affectionate and pious mother, in the arduous enterprize, will experience the necessity of frequent applications to the throne of Grace; led by the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, to intreat the Mercy of God for her Children as well as for herself; and to ask the aid of that God, to whom no good thing is impossible. She will be humbly and earnestly solicitous for *that honour which cometh from God only*; for though her province is the post of difficulty, and ought to be that of honour; she well knows that though the proper discharge of her duty is all-important, yet it is likely to be treated by men with neglect, if not contempt; nay, she knows that notwithstanding her best endeavours have been exerted for their benefit, it is still possible that she may, even by her own children, be treated with coldness and neglect, perhaps with impatience and disgust.—When such distressing circumstances occur, and many of them

do occur, without being confined altogether to Christian Women, what can support the heart under such accumulation of trials, if it is not that Meekness and Lowliness of heart which is learned of Jesus Christ? What can enable her to bear them patiently, and with composure and dignity, but that Resignation to the Divine Will which leads the heart of the Christian to say, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done?* What unspeakable benefit does the Christian Wife derive from *the Spirit of Meekness*, which forms her heart in the Image of her Blessed Lord!

But though it is surely true that these things may, and sometimes do, in part, befall the precious ones, who follow the Lord in Meekness and Lowliness of heart; it is also true that they but seldom befall them, and rarely, if ever are they all United in the lot of one person. On the contrary, *the Spirit of Meekness* is the very best preservative from them; this disposition blunts the edge of many thousand trifling and almost nameless irritations which sap the peace,

and mar the comfort of the heart where this spirit is not ; and unstrings many evils of greater name, which unhinge the happiness of thousands. Above all it introduces *the Peace of God which passeth understanding, to keep the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.* The Christian Wife is taught of God to hope that she may win the beloved partner of her heart to the Lord ; that she may be honoured as an instrument to reconcile him to God ; and in this hope she is stimulated to perseverance in Holiness and Meekness ; well knowing that should she even fail of succeeding in her best endeavours for his benefit, still her labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Should the foul tongue of Slander attack her, the purity of her heart and life will give the lie to defamation ; and she enjoys the supreme blessedness of approving herself to God, the searcher of hearts, who will receive her with *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* What other course of life opens so fair a prospect of securing the most cordial affection, and the most

respectful attention of her Children? How many blessings does she communicate to the circle of her acquaintance? and how greatly is society at large indebted to her for the faithful and successful attention with which she has reared up and cultivated some of its best supports and fairest ornaments? *Her Children arise up, and call her Blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates, Prov. xxxi. 28, 30, 31.*



LETTER V.

*The Spirit of the Law.*

**I**N the Gospel according to Matthew, chap. xxii. 34—40. we are informed that when our Lord had put the Sadducees to silence, the Pharisees were gathered together; then one of them, a teacher of the Law, made trial of him with this question, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” Jesus answering, said unto him, “*Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like

unto it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." This is *the Law* which Paul says is *Spiritual*; and styles it *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus*; which makes free from the *Law of sin and death*, Rom. vii. 14. and viii. 2. and *the Law of God*, chap. viii. 7. James calls it *the perfect Law of Liberty*, and *the Royal Law*, James i. 25. and ii. 8. All these different names are expressive of *the Spirit of the Law* which is LOVE. *God is Love*; the Law of Love flows from him as the infinite fountain, and the fruits of it return to Him as their ultimate centre, as all the rivers run into the sea, Eccl. i. 7. *God is a Spirit, and they who acceptably worship him, worship him in Spirit and in Truth.* They are reunited to him by *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus*, and thereby made free from the *Law of sin and death*; hence it is styled *the Law of Faith*, which the Gospel was intended *not to make void, but to establish.* Rom. iii. 27, 31.

Mankind, in a state of alienation from the Life of God, are rebels against the Divine Law. The Apostle rightly says, *the Carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be*, Rom. viii. 7. The reason is obvious ; men in revolting from God became dead to Divine things, because they turned away from the source of their Life. They had shut their ears against the word of the Living God, they had closed their eyes that they should not see. They could now only attain to the shadow ; but had no perceptions which could reach to the Spirit or substance of the Law of God, which is *spiritual* ; hence the propriety of the Apostle's observation, 1 Cor. ii. 14. that, *the Soulish man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are Spiritually discerned*. Every man comes into this world in a state of *Spiritual Death* ; and while he continues in that state, is incapable of the Spiritual understanding of the Law of God, or of any obedience

which comes nearer to it than *paying tythe of Mint, Anise, and Cummin* was to *Judgment, Mercy, and Faith*. No power but the power of *God who raiseth the dead*, can raise them from this state, quickening them from death in trespasses and sins. So the Apostle states it—*God, who is Rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us.*—For this very purpose the Son of God was sent, *anointed with the Holy Spirit, and with power, to speak the words of God; that the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God, and that they who would hear should live. It is He who unstoppeth the ears of the deaf, that they should hear the words of the book, as they were intended to be heard; that the truth therein testified should reach their hearts, and set them free from the bonds of Spiritual death, and bring them to the glorious liberty of the Sons of God, by the operation of the Spirit of Truth, which the world cannot receive, while abiding in Death. It is He who openeth the eyes of the blind, that they should see out of obscurity and out of*

*darkness*; that by renewing them in the knowledge of *The only True God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, he might renew in them that *Spiritual Life* from which they had fallen; and thereby bring them under the operation of *The Law of the Lord, which is perfect converting the Soul*. There is no right knowledge of God without knowing that *God is Love*. There can be no true knowledge of Jesus Christ in any person but in those in whom *God reveals his Son*; and he can only be revealed as *the Image of the Invisible God, the manifestation of his Love*. Such is our Lord's own testimony, *God so Loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son*. This is equally true in the public testimony in the Scriptures concerning him, and in that Spiritual perception of him in the hearts of individuals, which is produced by the Divine Spirit enlightening their understanding, that they may know *the things that are freely given to them of God*. 1 Cor. 2. 12. Those whose eyes are thus opened will understand the im-

port of our Lord's testimony, John 6. 40. *This is the will of him that sent me; that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.*

The Apostle shews in Rom. 10. 4. that—*Christ is the end of the Law for Righteousness, to every one that believeth.* This end of the Law is not its destruction but its fulfilment; Christ's own testimony is, that he *came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it.* Mat. 5. 17. The same Apostle shews Rom. 13. 10. that *Love is the fulfilling of the Law.* So also 1 Tim. 1. 5. *The end of the commandment is Charity, or Love.* The end of the Law, then, of which the Apostle speaks, is the *fulfilling* of it. The Law is the perfect standard or measure of *Righteousness.* The Sum of what the Law requires, as stated by our Lord, is, *Perfect Love to God and Man,* in its full operation, producing its proper fruits. This, and this alone, is *Righteousness.* This Righteousness was exemplified in absolute perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is thence styled *the*

*end of the Law for Righteousness.* Herein we perceive the reason of the Father's declaration, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,* confirming the prophetic testimony, Isa. 42. 21. *The Lord is well pleased for his Righteousness sake, he shall magnify the Law and make it honourable.* Those who believe the record which God hath given of his Son, and they only, will perceive this magnifying and honouring of the Law completely manifested in that perfect Love to God and man, which produced the obedience of Christ unto the death; and they are made partakers of the same Spirit of Love, shed abroad in their hearts, and bringing forth in them the same spiritual fruits, conforming them to His Image; *for with the heart man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Rom. 10. 10. The belief with the heart is a belief unto *the same Righteousness,* whereby *Christ is the End of the Law;* for *the Righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in them who walk not after the flesh, but the Spirit;* the con-

*feſſion with the mouth*; denotes not only verbal confeſſion, but alſo the obedience of Faith unto Salvation, they having the ſame ſpirit of Faith as he had, as it is written, *I believed therefore have I ſpoken, they alſo believe and therefore ſpeak*; hence the reaſon of the Apoſtle concluding the fourth verſe in theſe words,—*to every one who believeth*; becauſe the work of Faith, is connected in them with the labour of Love and the patience of Hope in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in the ſight of God even our Father. *The New Commandment is true in him and in them.* They walk in the ſame Spirit of Love, and receive *the end of their Faith, the Salvation of their ſouls.*

The Law was a ſchoolmaſter, a conductor of youth unto Chriſt that thoſe who were ſo conducted ſhould be juſtified by Faith. Moſes deſcribeth the Righteouſneſs which is of the Law, that *the man who doth theſe things ſhall live in them.* The deſign of the Law was *not to give life*; but to direct the conduct of thoſe to whom life had been given; which life could



only be enjoyed in doing what the Law required. This was the case with every Divine Law, at every time from the days of Adam downward. God first gave life to Adam and then gave him a Law, in obedience to which only, he could live, with intimation that in the day in which he disobeyed, *dying he should die*; which accordingly took place, for on the day in which he transgressed the Divine Command death began to operate in him, and continued till he returned to the dust from which he was taken. When God separated the seed of Israel, he gave them his Laws, which if they kept they should live in them, and enjoy the blessings of the earthly economy; but if they did not keep them, they should be cast out of it, which accordingly came to pass. The ancients, who through Faith obtained a good report, were guided, not only by the letter, but also by the spirit of the Law, into the perception of those Spiritual things in prospect, which the earthly shadows typified. The language of the *Righteousness which is of Faith*, Deut. 30,

10,—16. as quoted Rom. 10, 6,—9. was as nearly the same in their days, as in the days of the Apostles, as the nature of the two Dispensations could admit of; and in both, men *believed with the heart unto Righteousness, and confessed with the mouth unto Salvation.*

Yet, notwithstanding the explicit and harmonious testimony of the Scriptures, *Christ being the end of the Law for Righteousness to every one who believeth*, has been considered as signifying that *the personal Righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers, as their Righteousness*, by which *imputed Righteousness* they are *Justified before God*, without any respect to their being *doers of the Law*. This, like many other passages of Scripture, has been much misunderstood, by being viewed detached from the general scope of the subject or reasoning, and from the connection in which the Wisdom of God had placed it; this is one of the hurtful effects of those Systems of Theology which human Wisdom hath contrived, operating with a puzzling and blinding effect on the minds of

men whereby they have been turned from the truth, and turned unto fables, darkening their understandings and marring their comfort.

The earthly economy to which the Law of Moses applied, in the first instance, was a shadow of Spiritual Things; the earthly blessings were not purchased by Moses or Joshua, but were freely given of God. Nothing was to be done by the people, nor by any other in their stead, in order to merit Canaan or the blessings which were freely given of God. The people were to continue to enjoy these blessings by doing the things which the Law required. The Spiritual Dispensation, with all its spiritual blessings are the substance of the former earthly shadows. Nothing can be done by mankind to bring Christ down, or to raise him from the dead. *God hath freely given his only begotten Son, and hath raised him from the dead. God hath given him the kingdom, and authorized him to give the Kingdom of God to those who obey him; they can only enjoy the spiritual blessings in walking in*

the obedience of Faith; *being not without Law to God, but under Law to Christ.*

The Apostle had stated in this same epistle, chap. 2, 13. that *not the hearers of the Law are just before God; but the doers of the Law shall be justified.* This he illustrates by the case of the Gentiles, now called by the Gospel to the obedience of Faith; who, as he elsewhere expresses it, *were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and grafted into the good olive tree; and from being far off, were made nigh by the blood of Christ; became fellow citizens, with the Saints, and of the household of God:* being, by believing the Gospel, put in possession of the like privileges and blessings as the believers among those who were stiled *Jews by Nature;* and like them, their continuing to enjoy these blessings, was connected with their *doing the things contained in the Law,* although they had not been favoured with the earthly privileges which God had appointed in the ritual economy. Therefore he says, verses 14, 15. *For when the Gentiles who have not the Law by nature,*

(such is the true reading,) *do the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves; which shew the work of the Law written in their hearts.* Agreeable to the promises of the New Covenant, Jer. 31. 33. and Ezek. 36, 25,—27. in which the Gentiles are made to rejoice with his people; for the Gentiles here spoken of are obviously those who *bear the word of the Gospel and believe.* Where are there any, whether Jews or Gentiles, who do the things contained in the Law, unless it be those who *walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; in whom the Righteousness of the Law is fulfilled, when God writes his Law in their hearts, and they keep his Judgments and do them?*

Paul was particularly *the Apostle of the Gentiles*, and was Zealous that they should not be brought under the Yoke of the Ceremonial Law; *manifesting to them without the Law, the Righteousness of God, witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, as the Justifier of the Gentiles, the Uncircumcision, through Faith;* as well as of

*the Jews, the Circumcision, by Faith; and shewing that when the uncircumcision, which is by nature, keep or fulfil the Law, they shall Judge those Jews by nature, who, by the letter and circumcision do transgress the Law. The Gentiles are made fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel. Ephes. 3, 6. which was that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ; that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through Faith. Gal. 3, 14.*

These promises were often repeated in the Old Testament, particularly Jer. 31, 33. Ezek. 11, 19, and 36, 27. where the Lord promises that he would give them *a New heart, an heart of flesh; on the tables of which the Spirit of the Law should be written*, in distinction from the *Stony heart*, to which only, *the Letter, written on tables of Stone*, could reach. The *Teaching* also was to be *of God*; and this teaching should *draw them to Jesus Christ*. Such is our Lord's own interpretation, John 6. 44, 45. *No one can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent*

*me draw him ; and I will raise him up at the last day ; It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every one, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

When men begin to think seriously about Christianity, it is very natural that they should inquire into the evidences of its Truth ; and where the mind is honest and sincere, the examination will lead to full conviction. In this inquiry, however, they may meet with difficulties. Philosophy and Wit, both falsely so called, have employed all the resources of Subtlety, Sophistry, and Ridicule, associated with the sneers and blasphemy of ignorant and audacious Profligacy, in order to abolish Christianity,——in vain.——Christianity has remained unshaken.—Their weapons could not reach it. These weapons have indeed successfully assailed many things which, through mistake, have been deemed parts of Christianity ; but which were not of God. These were of human origin, and of course were within the

reach of the opposers; who have been wisely suffered to expose the absurdity of these spurious parts, that the Genuine Truths of God might be freed from such adulterating mixture. Even the *external* evidences of the truth and excellence of Christianity have been sufficient to silence gainfayers. These evidences may be understood by men whose hearts remain unchanged. There may be such a perception of the truth and beauty of Christianity, which men may so rest satisfied with, as to minister food for their vanity, and gratification for self-love; and thereby prevent men from coming to Christ. Hence, according to our Lord's own Statement, *Hearing* alone is not sufficient; it is needful for us also to *Learn of the Father*, in order to come to the *Son*. We are not *taught of God*, unless we not only *hear* but so attend to *what we hear*, as to *Learn of the Father*; and his teaching invariably leads to *the Son*, in whom *it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell*.

The record which God hath given of his Son, is the very mean by which the Father



draws men to the Son, that they may believe on him whom God hath sent; and believing on him, they are made partakers of the same spirit with which he was anointed; *the same anointing teacheth them of all things; and is truth and is no lie.* This Anointing Spirit, shed on believers through Jesus Christ, is that whereby they are taught of God; so that they need not that any man should teach them; because *the Holy Spirit taketh of the things of Jesus and sheweth unto them.*

That knowledge of the Truth and Excellency of Christianity, which may be acquired or increased by the conversation or the writings of men who have studied the subject, is highly proper and important; being calculated to answer the doubts and difficulties which may arise in the minds of inquirers, or be suggested by others; and though it does not change the heart, yet it tends to dispose it to submission to the *Divine Teaching*; but when the understanding comes to be enlightened, and the heart thereby purified and renewed by

the Divine Spirit; the believers are led to the spiritual perception of the things of God—of that grand principle of Divine Goodness, which pervades every part of the Conduct of God, and to which they had formerly been in a great measure strangers; their whole hearts are led to the Love of God, and obedience to his Will, with an energy and devotedness unknown before. Their reason, formerly clouded and misled by ignorance and prejudice, is now cleared from that obscurity, and perceives the things of the Spirit of God, with a perspicuity of which they had formerly no adequate idea. This produces in them by degrees that *habit of doing the things contained in the Law*, or in other words *doing the Will of God*; which familiarizes Divine things to their understandings, and renders them capable of what the Apostle, with great propriety styles, *the riches of the full assurance of understanding*. Col. ii. 2. Their Faith rests not now alone on the testimony of men or books; *the Divine spirit beareth witness with their spirits that they are Children of God.*

They may say as the Samaritans did of old, *Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we ourselves have heard and seen that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world.*

Having found *The Christ the Saviour of the world*, they know him not after the flesh; but being partakers of the same anointing which was poured without measure on the living Head, they, as members of his body, are *Joined to the Lord in one Spirit*; having *Christ in them the hope of Glory*. From the state of *Death in Sins*, they have been revived into *Spiritual Life in Christ*, by the same spirit which raised our Lord *Jesus Christ from the dead*; they are created anew in *Christ Jesus*, hence the Apostle says, 2 Cor. v, 17. *If any man be in Christ he is a new Creature. The love of Christ constraining such to live not to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again*; they are led to count themselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through *Jesus Christ our Lord*, that they may walk with him in *newness of life*. Rom. 6. They are led by the spirit of God, to live in the Spi-

*rit and walk in the Spirit, whereby that Spiritual Righteousness, the end of the Law which is Spiritual, is fulfilled in them, which is essentially necessary to their abiding in him who is their Life; and by which they are more and more nourished up till they attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. They are not of the world as He was not of the world; and in a way which the world cannot understand, THEY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, AND BELIEVING, THEY HAVE LIFE THROUGH HIS NAME.*

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